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DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN

By the same author

GIBBON

CHARLES I AND CROMWELL

VICTORIAN ENGLAND: PORTRAIT OF AN AGE

DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN

Essays

by
G. M. YOUNG



*Not unholy names, I hope?
said Mr. Pecksniff*

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I am particularly grateful to the Clarendon Press for allowing me to reprint the Introduction to *Select Speeches of Macaulay* in the World's Classics. In that volume (and nowhere else, I think) the reader interested in Indian matters can study the text of Macaulay's Minutes on Indian Education, the consequences of which are not yet exhausted.

Κούφα γὰρ δαπάνᾳ νομί—
ζε ν ἰσχὺν τόδ' ἔχειν
ὅ τι ποτ' ἄρα τὸ δαμόνιον
τό τ' ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ νόμιμον
ἄει φύσει τε πεφυκός.

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MACAULAY

IN 1853 Henry Vizetelly, a publisher not of the best repute, issued Macaulay's speeches in two volumes: they appeared simultaneously in New York. As Hansard had given his licence and most of the speeches had already appeared in the newspapers, Macaulay had no redress at law. There was no malice in the book, though much ignorance: the text was often taken from bad reports, and the historical allusions were sadly mishandled: but Vizetelly cannot be taxed with any graver crime than the desire to sell for a guinea what had cost him nothing. Other men might have been amused, annoyed or flattered. Macaulay felt the indignation of a Roman Senator at hearing that his most admired pieces were being circulated by a Greek freedman with an imperfect knowledge of Latin syntax. To protect his reputation as an historian and stylist, he prepared an edition of his own, and he took the occasion to castigate the unprincipled Vizetelly as grimly and eloquently as if he had been a Quaker who had written a bad poem, or a Scotsman who had opposed a Whig Bill.

The result is a book of unique interest both as a literary classic and an historic document. No one now – though the designers of the Reading Room seem to have thought otherwise – would place Macaulay either as a writer or thinker above or even on a level with Burke. But, long and illustrious as the roll of English orators is, there is no third whose speeches are part of our literature,

and of the two there seems little doubt that as a master of the spoken word Macaulay was the more effective. Almost from his first appearance, he was in the front rank of Parliamentary figures. Yet though he was a good party man, who could be trusted to do his duty in the division lobbies, and in any office which did not keep him too long from his books, he did not, after his first fervour was spent, enjoy the life: he hated bad air and late nights, and he never much liked hearing other men talk. Without charm or elocution he became a Parliamentary favourite: without birth or manners he made his way into the inner, though never the innermost, counsels of the Whigs: a bad candidate and a negligent member, he compelled the electors of Edinburgh to beg for the honour of having him as their representative, and, when Edinburgh rejected him, the freeholders of Oxfordshire could hardly be prevented from returning him against his will. There is no parallel to the ascendancy which he exercised in the House, and if it seems extravagant to say that he owed it to his style, we can only ask: to what else did he owe it?

Certainly not to his manner, which by all accounts was exceedingly bad. Questioned by his nephew, Mr. Gladstone tactfully replied that no one noticed it: their one thought was not to miss a word he said. An American visitor described him as 'a little man of small voice, affected utterance, clipping his words and hissing like a serpent'. A reporter of experience and good judgment, G. H. Francis, confirms the account. 'His voice is one of the most monotonous and least agreeable of those which usually belong to our countrymen north of the Tweed:

pitched in alto and rather shrill, pouring forth words in inconceivable velocity: never stopping for words, never stopping for thoughts, never halting for an instant even to take breath, hauling the subject after him with the strength of a giant, till the hearer is left prostrate and powerless by the whirlwind of ideas and emotions that has swept over him.' 'Yet,' the same critic adds, 'no impression whatever has been made by the orator on your feelings, nor has he created any confidence in himself apart from the arguments he has used.'

The arguments are always of the most obvious kind, and it is worth while examining some of the most successful speeches to see with how few *loci communes* Macaulay operates. In the speech on the Anatomy Bill, a masterpiece in little, there are two: the poor are most in danger of burking; the poor are the greatest sufferers by bad surgery. Each is re-stated six times, and the demonstration is rounded off with a picturesque anecdote. Between the beginning and end of a very short speech, Macaulay has touched on the habits of murderers, France, Germany, Italy, the peasants of Russia and their Tsar, mountebanks and barbers, old women and charms, the squaring of the circle and the transit of Venus, Richard of England, Leopold of Austria, and the bricklayer who falls from a ladder. The listener has been borne at exhilarating speed, but in perfect security, through a variegated landscape and deposited at his destination before he has had time to wonder where he is going.

The fine speech on the Ten Hours Bill, of which Macaulay was justly proud, is more mature in composition,

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but in structure equally simple. A government can interfere too much or too little: it is difficult to know where to draw the line: in this case I think that a modified interference can be justified from admitted principles: nevertheless, it is an experiment and I advise caution. That is the framework: the rest is illustration, ranging from Athens to the London cab-ranks, from the Exodus to the French Revolution, and sparkling with coloured vignettes of men with pails and whitewash brushes, housemaids toiling up and downstairs, settlers in Ohio, negroes in Louisiana, and the Sunday calm in England, 'while the plough lies in the furrow, while the Exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory'. The decoration is not laid on: like the pinnacles and flying buttresses of a cathedral, it is an integral part of the fabric. The speaker is thinking in images drawn from an inexhaustible store of historic reminiscence, and flashed on the mind of the listener with the force and dexterity of a born story-teller.

Macaulay's fertility in restatement and illustration, of which the speeches on Copyright furnish the best example, amused his contemporaries. There seems no reason why he should ever stop, and too often he stops on a point which a more delicate taste would have rejected as merely smart. The critic whom I have already quoted writes: 'He will sometimes spoil the effect of an eloquent passage by a sudden antithetical allusion, involving some vulgar idea, which catches him because of the opportunity it affords for alliteration and contrast and which he thinks humorous.' It is very true, and it will be found that these vulgar ideas commonly occur in the last

sentence of a paragraph. The Attic ending did not appeal to Macaulay, and he likes to close not in a dying fall, but an explosion. It is a symptom of a certain commonness of mind which was perhaps the most deep-seated and most insidious defect in his constitution. Mr. Gladstone called him φορτικός, and though he hastened with suave sophistry to explain that he used the word in a laudatory sense, the epithet was in its proper sense entirely just. A Greek audience listening to the little man be-rating Peel and Wellington in these terms,

We have lived to see a monster of faction made up of the worst parts of the Cavalier and the worst parts of the Roundhead. We have lived to see Tories who because they were not allowed to grind the people after the fashion of Strafford turn round and revile their sovereign in the style of Hugh Peters . . .

would have shaken their heads and murmured φορτικωτέρως δημηγορεῖ. In fact, if one had to define exactly what Aristophanes and Plato meant by the word one could not answer better than by saying: Macaulay on Croker, or Macaulay on Bacon.

It is observable that this vein is less obtrusive in the Speeches, where it might have been expected to be more conspicuous, than in the Essays. It was intensified by solitude and withdrawal from the clash of opinion. Macaulay was never more urbane than in the presence of a large audience: the banter in his last Edinburgh speech about Spenser Walpole's militia-men and Lord Maidstone's hexameters displays an easy humour which is very rare in his writings. His Parliamentary style is

tighter and more mordant. But his best speeches, whether in the House or on the platform, display the natural excellences of his prose better than any passages in the *Essays* or the *History*. The diction is of flawless lucidity, slightly touched with an amplitude which reminds us that the speaker was born in the eighteenth century, when 'every point of senatorial deliberation was duly observed'. The movement of thought is slightly ahead of the audience, but not too far ahead: each paragraph has its own keynote, its appropriate cadences, and the language rises and falls from narrative to declamation, and back to straight hard-hitting argument, without effort, or interruption, or display.

There are indications in the essay on Machiavelli that Macaulay was on his way towards a more varied manner and a fuller harmony than in fact he ever achieved. His development was arrested by his entry into public life and his four years' exile in India. The *Edinburgh Reviewer* went into Parliament: he conquered Parliament with speeches in the style of his first reviews. His manner became set, and with his speaking, as with his writing, if a paragraph were taken at random it would be almost impossible to guess whether the speaker was in his thirty-second or his fifty-second year. Thus, in his own lifetime, he became a classic and a tradition: Londoners pointed him out to one another in the streets: when he rose in his place for the last time the members who crowded in to hear him, listened to what was not only an intellectual but an historic entertainment, the last echo of the oratory of 1831, itself an echo of the oratory of the heroic age. In Macaulay the tradition

which began with Halifax on the Exclusion Bill, and was continued, first through Bolingbroke, Pulteney, and Chatham, and then through the second dynasty of Burke and Fox and Pitt; the tradition which was still maintained in Macaulay's youth by Brougham, Plunket, and Canning, sent up its last coruscation and expired. There were great speakers still to come: Bright more than once reaches a height where only Burke or the ancients afford a valid comparison. But professed oratory, the deliberate evolution of a theme in language meant to tell on the nerves of the hearers at once, and to stand the test of literature a generation later, has not been heard again.

Bagehot said, with some truth and some malice, that Macaulay regarded English history as a process leading up to the debates in which he had taken part. He went up to Cambridge a Clapham Tory: after the straitest sect of our religion he was bred a Pharisee. Two brilliant contemporaries, Charles Austin and Lord Carnarvon, won him over to the Whigs. Thirty years before, George Canning had sat in the Temple weighing his chances, and had decided that for a new man with nothing but parts to commend him there were no prospects on the Whig side. But now, after a generation of office, Toryism was growing old. We who have lived to see what the winding up of a great war involves, can appreciate better than contemporaries could the dexterity with which Castlereagh disengaged Great Britain from continental commitments, the firmness with which disorder was suppressed at home, and the ability with which the finances of the

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State were restored. Lord Liverpool's last administration was one of the most capable that has ever held office in England, but it was an administration that only Lord Liverpool could keep together. Wellington and Eldon, Canning at the Foreign Office, Peel at the Home Office, Huskisson at the Board of Trade, Palmerston at the War Office, made a team of rare capacity. The stroke which robbed the team of their captain destroyed the cohesion of the party and released the nervous rancour of years. Canning shot upwards, carrying Robinson, Huskisson, and Palmerston with him. Peel went into opposition with Wellington and Eldon. Canning died, and Peel came back to accomplish Canning's policy, the emancipation of the Catholics. The ins and outs of the next few months are a burden to the memory, without meaning or purpose. The hour of the Whigs had almost come when Lord Lansdowne offered the young reviewer, Jeffrey's greatest discovery, a seat in the House as member for Calne. Ten months later, the forty years of Tory government ended in panic, confusion, and flight.

The Reform was one of those transactions, of which history does not present many examples, when the right thing was done in exactly the right way at exactly the right time. In the life of a nation the rational and irrational elements need to be kept in adjustment. Tradition, habit, instinct and inertia, which are the grounds of public stability, may at times become an exasperation and a burden to the public intelligence, developing with the emergence of new ideas under the pressure of new circumstances. In the Constitution of 1830 the irrational element was in excess: the rational

element was working with dangerous potency. Government was neither oppressive nor inefficient, but it was becoming absurd. All the arguments on both sides of the question came to this: the Constitution works well and people are used to it; the Constitution is unreasonable and people are tired of it. To Macaulay the situation in November 1830 appeared as the particular case of a secular problem, to find a mode of government which shall command the rational adherence of the intelligent, on whom government depends for its efficacy, and the habitual respect of the masses, on whom it depends for its existence. In England the problem had been brought to an issue by the emergence of the mercantile and manufacturing classes as a self-conscious entity. But in the problem itself there was nothing new; and Lord Grey and Lord John Russell, in abolishing nomination and enfranchising Manchester, were acting as the heirs and representatives of all great reformers in all ages back to the very origins of western polity, the Licinian Rogations and the enfranchisement of the Latins.

Sic fortis Etruria crevit

Scilicet et facta est rerum pulcherrima Roma.

The pictorial quality of Macaulay's mind, the strong pragmatic element in his composition, his confident ignorance of philosophy and art, tend to mask both the depth and clarity of his metaphysic. Some metaphysic every historian must have, and in essentials Macaulay's is the metaphysic of Herodotus. The modern naturally has the keener sense of change and the problems which change involves: the ancient has a broader

sympathy, a larger conception of human needs and satisfactions. Ionian cosmology was a grander discipline for the mind than Baconian trial and error. But essentially they view the stream of time from the same standpoint, and see in history, one the assertion, the other the perpetual reassertion, of a timeless rationality. 'The dawn appeared and they mustered the men. Themistocles spoke to them, in language of extraordinary eloquence. The substance was this: having contrasted the better with the worse in the whole range of human nature and its circumstances, he exhorted them to prefer the better. When he had ended, he ordered them to go on board.' So the great Ionian conceived the morning of Salamis, and so Macaulay conceived the closing of the gates of Londonderry.

So also, let it be acknowledged, did he contemplate the future, in 1931, with Ben Lomond laid out in allotments, with cranes and sirens, lorries and steam engines,

Breaking the silence of the seas,
Among the farthest Hebrides,

with factory towns, each encircled with a zone of villas complete with piano and laburnum tree, blackening the skies above Killarney. His first biographer entered thoroughly into his spirit when he headed one of his electoral speeches *Loveliness and Intelligence of Leeds*. An intellect less vigorous might have doubted the loveliness and intelligence of early Victorian England: an intellect more subtle might have been perplexed to account for its more obtrusive stupidity and squalor. Modern psychology would ask whether a man who seems

so sure of everything was really sure of anything; whether he was not in fact declaiming to keep his spirits up, clinging to his professions the more passionately because in his heart he felt that he and his professions were being swept away together, and that Pascal's abyss was awaiting him if once he stopped reading to think.

To reason thus would be to forget that Macaulay was by birthright an historian, and the historian is one for whom the past keeps something of the familiar triviality of the present, and the present already has some of the shadowy magnificence of the past. Movement and continuity are the conceptions with which he works, and what aesthetic writers claim a passionate apprehension of form to be to the painter, a passionate apprehension of process is to the historian. Macaulay's view of life was somewhat narrow: Whig constitutionalism, Augustan humanity, Baconian induction furnished him with all the canons he required to measure its advance. That the nineteenth century was richer, more intelligent, more comfortable and more humane than any that had preceded it was enough, and that England led the world in riches, intelligence, comfort and humanity was a source of endless pride and satisfaction. Like Cromwell's plain russet-coated captain, he understood what he was fighting for and loved what he understood. His mind was the mind of a scholarly English rationalist of the early railway age and pronounced political views; a belated Augustan like Byron captivated, but like Byron unconverted, by Shelley and Scott. But the springs of his genius were deeper, in an alert and vigorous humanism, which transcended and illuminated his pragmatic

philosophy. Nothing recorded of him is more characteristic than a trivial entry in his diary. Roaming in the lanes round Esher he fell in with a party of hop-pickers whom he treated to a pot of beer. 'I liked their looks and I thought their English remarkably good for their rank in life. It was in truth the Surrey English, the English of the suburbs of London, which is to the Somerseshire and Yorkshire what Castilian is to the Andalusian, or Tuscan to Neapolitan.' Macaulay had no Wordsworthian illusions about peasants, or the goodness of the lower orders as such. But the sound of a few well-uttered words was enough to set his mind ranging in search of some kindred excellence, from the Surrey alehouse to the stage trodden by the highbred nobles of Calderon, and 'the gardens where Lorenzo meditated a song for the Mayday dance of the Etrurian virgins'.

His Whig scorn for the irrationality of mobs blazes in his speech on the People's Charter. But not less fiery is the humanist's scorn for those who would withhold from the people their birthright of leisure and instruction. Untouched by the new cosmology which was unseating man from his ancient pre-eminence as eldest child and vicegerent of the Creator, Macaulay in his heart believed in that perfectibility at which Carlyle gibed. As sceptical as Gibbon, he left Vital Religion behind him at Clapham where it belonged, and took in its place a buoyant because demonstrable faith in human progress. *Il a son orgueil d'homme*: and out of this pride flowers the unexpected tenderness, the loving particularity with which he dwells on every instance of human goodness or ingenuity, courage in war, self-discipline in peace, of

science and invention, craftsmanship and discovery, that comes his way; or tracks the human associations of every place he mentions, remembering that the gardens of Sir Thomas Browne were the pride of Norwich, that Johnson's father had kept a weekly stall in Birmingham market, and that Scott had seen the sword-dance of the borderers 'at Keeldar by the sources of the Tyne'.

This humanism was drawn and nourished from the fountainhead, from Florence, from Rome, and from Athens, and of the three perhaps Italy yielded the largest draught. Brougham, before he learnt to be jealous, had advised him to nourish his eloquence on Demosthenes and Dante; and Dante, more than even Shakespeare or the Greeks, was in literature the great passion of his life. It is easier to picture him in Florence of the fifteenth century, ensconced in some dignified but not laborious secretariat, than in any other place or age except his own. The affinity in a temperament so unaesthetic is somewhat surprising: not even Mrs. Austin could get him to look at a Primitive with patience; his favourite painter was Correggio, his favourite architecture the palaces of the High Renaissance. But intellectually he homes to Florence and the Early Renaissance as instinctively as he shrinks from the Dark Ages and the North, and his essay is still reprinted in Italy as the best introduction to the study of Machiavelli.

Once this humanism made a mark in history which, for good or evil, has not been, and is never likely to be, effaced. For their celebrity and their consequences, Macaulay's Minutes on Indian Education are the least

accessible writings in the language. They were not included in his works: Sir George Trevelyan in the *Life* gave only an abbreviated text: there is no complete copy in the British Museum. Enough is now reprinted to show the spirit in which Macaulay approached the problem, and if the spirit is, in one of its aspects, English of 1835, in all the rest it is Italian of the Quattrocento, unrestrained by the necessity of paying a decent reverence to the practices of an established religion. The Company, in a remarkable document which office tradition no doubt rightly ascribed to the hand of James Mill, had laid down the principle that, as compensation for the authority they had lost by the Conquest, natives of the higher ranks were to be educated for positions of responsibility in the English services. Neither Mill nor Macaulay had any doubts where the path on which they were entering would lead them. An administration open to all Indians and manned even in the higher branches by Indians of birth was bound in the long run to become an Indian administration. It remained to fit the Indians for their future, which, intellectually, meant to detach them from their past and to graft them, if they could be grafted, on to the stock of Western science and culture. The more liberal tradition which, since the days of Warren Hastings, had encouraged English officials to interest themselves in Eastern philosophy and literature, was to be brought to an end. It seems fairly clear that in Macaulay's mind it would be no great loss to India if the philosophy and literature themselves came to an end: the only Eastern writing in which he shows the faintest interest is a Sanskrit translation of Homer reported to be

current in the second century. Instruction in Arabic and Sanskrit could produce nothing but a learned native; instruction in English would open to the Indian all the treasures of Western knowledge. So Agricola had civilized the Britons; so Peter had civilized Russia: so Greece had carried her arts and language to the confines of that unknown world which in the revolution of time had become the dominion of the children of the sea. 'The sceptre may pass from us. Victory may be inconstant to our arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by no reverse. There is an empire exempt from all natural cause of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws.'

MR. AND MRS. DICKENS¹

IN themselves these letters are good reading, and Mr. Dexter's editorial work has been performed without fuss and with an excellent economy of notes, chronology, and index. If they had appeared anonymously, an acute reader would very soon have found himself observing that this man writes like Dickens, on page 72 that he must be Dickens, and on page 192 that he is Dickens.

An old lady who had been outside all day and came in towards dinner time, turned out to be the mistress of a Yorkshire school returning from the holiday-stay in London. She was a very queer old lady, and showed us a long letter she was carrying to one of the boys from his father, containing a severe lecture (enforced and aided by many texts from scripture) on his refusing to eat boiled meat. She was very communicative, drank a great deal of brandy and water, and towards evening became insensible.

The only travellers we have encountered have been two English maiden ladies, whom we found sitting on a rock (with parasols), in the most magnificent part of the Gorge of Gondo, the most awful portion of the Simplon, there awaiting their travelling chariot, in which, with their money, their parasols, and a perfect

¹ *Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dickens: His letters to her: With Notes, etc., by Walter Dexter.*

shop of baskets, they were carefully locked up by an English servant in sky-blue and silver buttons.

After dark last night, a landlord where we changed horses, discovered that the baggage would certainly be stolen unless cords were attached to each of the trunks, which cords were to hang down so that we might hold them in our hands all the way, and feel any tug that might be made at our treasures. You will imagine the absurdity of our jolting along some twenty miles in this way, exactly as if we were in three shower baths and afraid to pull the string,

Dickens at his ease, no doubt; neither his observation nor his fancy is working at full power, and, on the other hand, he is neither declaiming nor posturing. If we can suppose all other records to have been lost, our judgment based on these letters only would undoubtedly be that the writer was a man of great natural aptitude for prose, a well-bred, considerate man, addressing a wife to whom he was obviously devoted and who shared his interests and his friends. The letter preparing her for the death of their infant daughter is a touching example of the native delicacy which Bagehot singled out as one of Dickens's most attractive characteristics as a writer. There has not been a word to forewarn us of the announcement – 'Mr. and Mrs. Dickens have agreed to separate' – or of the explanation: 'I suppose that no two people, not vicious in themselves, ever were joined together, who had a greater difficulty in understanding one another, or who had less in common.'

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Of course, he was a natural author; he always found it easier to write than not to write. Even Byron, when he could forget that he was addressing Lady Byron, could run into most agreeable gossip about his journeys and the history of Ferrara; and letters came as easy to Dickens as diaries to Macaulay. Still, the whole tone of the correspondence is so unforced and intimate as to leave upon our minds the impression either that, when the crisis came, Dickens imagined the part to have been far more difficult than in truth it had been, or else that he had played for years a part imposed upon him by a sense of duty, and discharged with the self-control of a great actor determined to make the play succeed. Nothing will make of Dickens a simple character to understand. But those critics who believe that every work of art is the artist's substitute for going to bed with someone, or his excuse for going to bed with someone else, will find singularly little in these letters to substantiate their lures.

Of an ordinary man, one would say that, having found he had married the wrong woman, he made the best of the situation till the children were growing up and then resolved to end it by an amicable parting. But then, the ordinary man has an office to go to, a shop to manage, a ship or a battalion to command: in any case, an area of work, where the most incompatible wife, even if she neglects his children and makes his home uncomfortable, can work no serious disturbance. Dickens's work was done in his imagination, and after *David Copperfield* his imagination was beginning to flag. The effort was greater, the returns less. He felt it: we can feel it. His sap had gone into *David Copperfield*, and he needed a

season of refreshment and quiet before it would run again. The right wife would have provided it, and Catherine could not. In *Bleak House* we are aware that the wheels are grinding: in *Hard Times* they can hardly move the machine. If *Little Dorrit* were an Elizabethan play, critics would have been ready to prove that it was the work of an imitator with some incomparable scenes, the Marshalsea, the arrival at the Hospice, the death of Merdle, by the master's hand. The *Tale of Two Cities* is so far removed from Dickens's way that it hardly belongs to the Canon. A valuation of the Dickens concern in the fifties shows a steady depreciation of all the assets. The business man would cut his losses and reorganize. Dickens separated from his wife. To judge by the results, it was the wisest thing he could do: and if it was done with a shocking want of dignity, it was done cleanly, firmly, and generously. Having done it, he recovered control of his genius: he found his way back to the world where he was sovereign. He wrote *Great Expectations*: he ended on *Edwin Drood*: a serene evening after a splendid morning and a baleful afternoon.

Without these two, and without the dark magnificence of the River theme in *Our Mutual Friend*, we should have to think of him as exhausted by *David Copperfield* and going on mechanically when he had little or nothing more to say. 'In *Bleak House*', he wrote, 'I have purposely dwelt on the romantic side of familiar things.' Purposely: there is the weakness. The spontaneous irradiation of a created world with a natural and unsought beauty, which makes *David Copperfield* the wonder which it is, has been checked at its source. And yet, if ever we put to

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ourselves the question whether Dickens is great enough to carry his colossal faults, it is surely in this power that we must look for the answer. In *Great Expectations* it re-emerges, fainter perhaps, or mellower, but still authentic; and, for my own part, I feel it still working, with a grave, a delicate, a final perfection, in *Edwin Drood*.

A few strange faces in the streets: a few other faces, half strange and half familiar, once the faces of Cloisterham children, now the faces of men and women who come back from the outer world. To these, the striking of the cathedral clock, and the cawing of the rooks from the cathedral tower, are like voices of their nursery time. To such as these, it has happened in their dying hours afar off, that they have imagined their chamber-floor to be strewn with the autumnal leaves fallen from the elm trees in the Close: so have the rustling sounds and fresh scents of their earliest impressions revived when the circle of their lives was very nearly traced, and the beginning and the end were drawing close together.

Sunset, but the sunset of Homer.

CITIES AND HARVESTS

The Usbegs possess the cities and harvests of the great Bucharia.

GIBBON

A DIARY is not to be judged like other books, because in real life incidents will not happen in the right order, or observe their proper artistic balance. Mr. Byron's objective was the Oxus: his route was by Cyprus, Jerusalem, and Damascus into Persia; and thence by Afghanistan and the Khyber to Peshawar. But though his appeal to the Minister of the Interior of Turkestan might have melted a stone – a stone being assumed to have no appreciation of irony – he was not allowed to see the stream which, as he gracefully informed His Excellency, had been celebrated by the sacred pen of Matthew Arnold. So it was not the Oxus but Mr. Byron that proved to be the foiled circuitous wanderer. But one disappointment, in a region which seems to be half-crazy with adolescent nationalism and the frontier-complex, is not much to set against such a harvest of things observed and felt. I divide travel books into those which make me want to go there, and those which make me thankful that someone else has gone for me. *The Road to Oxiana* is of the latter class. I trust I shall always be young enough to giggle consumedly over motor breakdowns and funny foreigners, but in the flesh I find them merely tiresome. And I would rather see the garden at Kavar through Mr. Byron's eyes than my

¹ *The Road to Oxiana*, by Robert Byron.

own, because they see so much more. It reminded me of another garden, one which Virgil knew, 'below the castled crag of Oebalia'.

Even finer is the journey across the steppe to the Tower of Kabus, itself alone worth many journeys.

As plans of cities are inset on maps of countries, another chart on a larger scale lay right beneath our wheels. Here the green resolved, not into ordinary grass, but into wild corn, barley, and oats, which accounted for that vivid fire, as of a life within the green. And among these myriad bearded alleys lived a population of flowers, buttercups, and poppies, pale purple irises and dark purple campanulas, and countless others, exhibiting all the colours, forms and wonders that a child finds in its first garden. Then a puff of air would come, bending the corn to a silver ripple, while the flowers leaned with it; or a cloud shadow, and all grew dark as for a moment's sleep, though a few feet off there would be no ripple and no darkness; so that this whole inner world of the steppe was mapped on a system of infinite minute recessions, having just those gradations of distance that the outer lacked.

Of prose like that I can say nothing. Mr. Byron's references to childhood are always apt, as another passage will indicate:

The sound of the machinery became apocalyptic, clanking and fizzing without any sort of rhythm till at last, with a final deafening cannonade, it ceased altogether, and Abbas beamed at us with the expression

of a conductor laying down his baton at the end of an applauded symphony. A sympathetic report from the near hind tyre, though a beat late, announced that it too needed rest. There was no spare tyre. Gathering up the shreds of the outer cover, Abbas produced a patching outfit. The afternoon shadows were lengthening. It remained to bring the engine to life. But this was accomplished with a few random blows of a hammer, as one beats a child.

The power of making every situation yield all it contains of comedy and beauty at once is the best gift of a mature culture to its elect children. On this theme I should like some day to expatiate, with illustrations from the *Birds* of Aristophanes, from the *Misanthrope*, and, last and finest fruit of the insolent humanism of the eighteenth century, the verse and prose of another pilgrim who died one hundred and thirteen years ago. It is to this tradition that Mr. Byron adheres. By humanism I mean a determination of the mind to maintain its own poise, and to view the world in its own perspective: and I call it insolent for the readiness with which it turns to aggression if its poise is disturbed by sectarian clamour or its perspective blurred by fashionable sentiment. Kinglake had it, but in Kinglake I am always aware of an uneasy self-consciousness which prevents him from ever surrendering completely to the scene before him, or to his own emotions; while I do not suppose that Mr. Byron has ever struck out an adjective for fear that someone might call it sentimental, or mitigated a single impertinence lest someone should call it indiscreet. I am sure,

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too, that my most earnest representations will never stop him writing such sentences as –

Dawn, like a smile from the gallows, pierced the gusty, drizzling night.

And how, not being bootblacks, poppies manage to 'shine their leaves', I ask with no expectation of an answer.

How will the humanist approach Jerusalem?

The buildings are wholly of stone, a white cheese-like stone, candid and luminous, which the sun turns to all tones of ruddy gold. Charm and romance have no place. All is open and harmonious. The associations of history and belief, deep-rooted in the first memories of childhood, dissolve before the actual apparition . . . Set in this radiant environment, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre appears the meanest of churches . . . The visitor is in conflict with himself. To pretend to detachment is supercilious; to pretend to reverence, hypocritical. The choice lies between them. Yet for me that choice has been averted. I met a friend in the doorway, and it was he who showed me how to cope with the Holy Places. . . .

Stepping through the Franciscans as though they were nettles, Gabriel dived into a hole three feet high, from which came a bright light. The inner chamber was about seven feet square. At a low slab of stone knelt a Frenchwoman in ecstasy. By her side stood another Greek monk.

'This gentleman has been to Mount Athos,' announced Gabriel to his crony, who shook hands with

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me across the body of the Frenchwoman. 'It was six years ago – and he remembers Synesios' cat. This is the Tomb' – pointing to the slab of stone – 'I shall be in here all day to-morrow. There isn't much room, is there? Let's go out.'

I should like also to quote Baalbek – which, incidentally, tried Kinglake a little above his powers –

and the stone peach-coloured, with a marmoreal texture, not transparent, but faintly powdered, like bloom on a plum. . . .

The stars came out and the mountain slopes grew black. I felt the peace of Islam. And if I mention this commonplace, it is because in Egypt and Turkey that peace is now denied, while in India Islam appears, like everything else, uniquely and exclusively Indian. In a sense it is so; for neither man nor institution can meet that overpowering environment without a change of identity. But I will say this for my own sense: that when travelling in Mohammedan India without previous knowledge of Persia, I compared myself to an Indian observing European classicism, who had started on the shores of the Baltic instead of the Mediterranean.

The idea is new to me; I have no knowledge of my own with which to verify it; and it is less the originality or correctness of the observation that impresses me than the range of historic reflection which it implies. But the traveller among the monuments of Timarid magnificence and power has much to reflect upon, and

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the history of that astonishing race, who, ruling in Samarcand and Herát, made themselves felt from Pekin to Byzantium, furnishes the bony structure of Mr. Byron's narrative. It is a story to go to the heart of the humanist, when he reads, in the words of the Emperor Babur, how in Herat – as in Florence –

whatever work a man took up he aimed and aspired to bring it to perfection:

and it seems to reach its artistic climax in the mausoleum of Timur's daughter-in-law, Gohar Shad, whose history Mr. Byron has at last pieced together and elucidated.

Educated at Eton and one of the larger Oxford colleges, Mr. Byron finds it easy to assume the habits of a lower-middle-class Persian, and in that guise he was able to penetrate into her mosque. What follows I shall quote, because it conveys more completely than any other passage in the book the spirit in which Mr. Byron's pilgrimage was made.

Turbaned Mullahs, white-robed Afghans, vanished like ghosts between the orbits of the lamps, gliding across the black pavement to prostrate themselves beneath the golden doorway. A sound of chanting was heard from the sanctuary, where a single tiny figure could be seen abased in the dimness, at the foot of its lusted mihrab. Islam! Iran! Asia! Mystic, languid, inscrutable!! One can hear a Frenchman saying that, the silly fool – as if it was an opium den in Marseilles. We felt the opposite: that is why I mention it. Every circumstance of sight, sound, and trespass conspired

to swamp the intelligence. *The message of a work of art overcame this conspiracy, forcing its way out of the shadows, insisting on structure and proportion, on the impress of superlative quality, and on the intellect behind them.*

‘Please blow your nose,’ whispered our guide.

‘Why?’

‘I ask you, blow it, and continue to blow.’

Without the aesthetic apprehension, a man loses three parts of life: without the comic apprehension he is in danger of losing his head as well. But to the humanist, to the observer with a classical tradition behind him, it is not enough for the world to be lovely and amusing: it must be intelligent. Of Malcontenta, Mr. Byron writes:

Outside, people argue over the sides and affect to ignore the back. The front asks no opinion. It is a precedent, a criterion. You can analyse it – nothing could be more lucid; but you cannot question it. Europe could have bidden me no fonder farewell than this triumphant affirmation of the European intellect.

‘You can analyse it, but you cannot question it’: that is classicism. No room here for good intentions, or adumbrations, or compliances with what other people think you ought to think. The artist has said what he meant to say. Romantic art, and romantic criticism, is always hinting at the things left unsaid, and, too often, when you ask point blank: What are they? well, it just does not know. None of my readers, I hope, will suppose I think lightly of Ruskin if I confess that, every now and

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then, in reading him, I catch myself saying, like the Arab whom Palgrave charged two dirhems for an eye-wash, 'I say, Mister, remember God!' Far too much modern writing, I mean of the descriptive and analytic kind, seems to me to derive from the looser Victorian Romanticism, with the added demerit that the writers have taken their eye off the object, and are trying to squint simultaneously at their own subconscious and someone else's style.

Of the Omayyad Mosque, and the mosaic landscapes of the Grand Arcade, Mr. Byron says:

For all their Pompeian picturesqueness, their colonnaded palaces and crag-bound castles, they are real landscapes, more than mere decoration, concerned inside formal limits with the identity of a tree or the energy of a stream. •

If he had brought back nothing else, that lesson would be enough. But it is the lesson of the whole book. Identity and energy within formal limits, that is style, that is reason, that is freedom. I doubt if there was ever a time when we had more cause to be grateful for those who have the courage to assert their necessity, and the genius to exemplify their virtue.

THE LOST MANUSCRIPT

*Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli:
What becomes of a manuscript, depends on the reader
who pinches it.*

IT is quite unnecessary, I am sure, for me to tell my readers that I am no scholar:

both man and boy
Have been an idler in the land;
Contented if I might enjoy
The things that others understand,

and there are few things I enjoy more than the conversation of Mr. Henry Buggins. I count it one of the happiest chances of my life that Miss Mitford (the one who wrote *Highland Fling*, not the one who went to a party in a turban labelled 'Very chaste 5/9') should have made us acquainted; and I try to deserve the privilege of knowing him by listening attentively, questioning discreetly, and remembering as carefully as I can all that he has to tell me.

I was brought up to respect learning, and to think of scholars as men whose purged, considerate minds no breath of selfish passion ever ruffles; whose rivalry in the cause of truth is untainted by any thought of reputation or advantage to be gained in the generous contest; men against whom the worst charge malignity itself can bring is an excess of scruple where their personal

advancement is at stake. Such a one is Henry Buggins, and such I had supposed his brethren in the service of the austerer Muses to be.

I was therefore not a little startled when, as we stood together on the ramparts of Chiselbury Camp, and I was eagerly expecting him to utter some pregnant and instructive words on the memorials of early time surrounding us, to hear him exclaim, with deep and bitter emphasis,

God damn that swine ———

adding a name which I had been accustomed to revere, the name of a master, a lord of air and land, whom Sinai knew and Wessex knows: under whose godlike eye all Antiquity lies spread out like an Ordnance Map. I had never seen Henry so profoundly moved since the editor of *Classical Bits* sent back one of his emendations, and forgot to put a stamp on the envelope: I spare — indeed I have forgotten — his name, but he lives in Aberdeen.

It will of course be understood that Henry is in no way responsible for any mistakes into which I may have fallen in writing down this story. I made notes at the time and I have tried to copy the important words accurately. But I know no more about the subject than what I can remember of his conversation, and though I am sure he is incapable of conscious misrepresentation — still, who can answer for himself when his feelings have been so violently stirred? To be perfectly candid, I cannot see why he should take it so much to heart. But we all have our bees, and his buzz in a patch of willow herb which grows on Fovant Down.

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In the Wilton Cartulary (Harleian MSS. 438), Henry says, there are two Landbooks relating to Fovant. A Landbook is a grant of land, or lordship over land, made in Saxon times, the legal part being in Latin, and the boundaries being set forth in English, often in a very picturesque way, and with such precision that it is sometimes possible still to walk the bounds, point to point, of an estate marked out a thousand years ago. Some years since, in a piece of pioneer work which Henry respects unfeignedly, Dr. Grundy of Oxford identified hundreds of these points, and marked them on a 6-inch map, thus reconstituting, as it were, the landscape as it might have appeared to King Edgar or even King Alfred, streams, woods, marshes, and everything. Among the places which Dr. Grundy took in hand was this very Fovant where we were walking, and here he fell into the sort of error which the pioneer cannot avoid. Of the two Fovant Landbooks he followed the bad one, and the bad one led him into the patch of willow herb.

It is rather difficult, writing at second hand, to get it all right and clear, but, Henry says, in the bad charter, where the boundaries are climbing southward from the Nadder, up the face of the down, to the old Ridgeway on the top, the words are

upp on dune thrittig gyrda be eastan ceaster

blaedbyrig

up on the down thirty perches to the east of

Chester-blade-bury:

and Dr. Grundy guessed that these last words meant 'east of Chester Camp where the flowers grow'. It

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certainly is curious that close at hand there should be a patch of willow herb, which may, for anything I know, have been there a thousand years ago. But, as Henry says, *Amicus Grundy, magis amica veritas* (Horace), and in the original text, there is nothing about flowers, whether wild or tame.

This part I can follow, because I looked up the word for him in the *Oxford Dictionary*, and found that he was, of course, quite right. Blade meant to our ancestors what it does to us: an oarblade for example, or the blade of a spear, and sometimes a leaf, like the German *Blatt*. But not a flower; and Chester-blade-bury, well, Henry says, the Lord he knoweth what that may mean.

But, Henry says, look at the good Landbook, and all is plain as daylight. Here the words are

thon bi eastan cester slaed byrg XXX gerda,

thirty perches east of the Camp on Chesterslade.

And that we have got the right place you can see from the name, because you have only to say Chestersladebury for a few generations and it will wear down, by way of Chesledbury, to Chiselbury as it is to-day. Henry explained to me the difference between a slade and a path, and a chester and a bury, and how to tell a good Landbook from a bad; it was all most interesting and improving, but it does not come into this story.

But it appears that in the seventeen years that have passed since Dr. Grundy wrote, those imaginary flowers have taken root. Everybody quotes them as a remarkable instance of plant persistence. Fovant believes in them as

firmly as in the Bible. From Teffont Ewias to Baverstock, across the downs to Broad Chalke and up the stream to Ebbesborne Wake, hostesses who want a quiet Sunday afternoon say 'Have you seen the willow herb on the down? It is mentioned in A.D. 901.' Henry, who fears error as some people fear infection, thought it his duty to check the spread; and so he wrote, in his modest and respectful way, a little paper on the subject. But of course, however modest and respectful you may be, if you think you are right you cannot help saying that somebody else is wrong; and Henry, who is rather child-like in some ways, let his fancy play on a number of learned persons all walking after Dr. Grundy into the willow herb, and getting lost there. This was how the trouble came, because the Editor, a little flummoxed by Henry's erudition, and a little dismayed by his audaciousness, passed the paper on, to the Greatest Living Authority, who was unluckily one of the people whom Henry had been convicting of sin: of two sins, in fact — one, not verifying their references, and two, arguing from documents they couldn't construe. And the modest and respectful little paper has never been heard of again.

That was how Henry came to be using such startling language as we stood on the ramparts of Chiselbury Camp; and we had made the whole round, across the head of Wolfcombe, through Dellwood, to the Landshare Oak, and so to Nadderstream and the Hoar Hazel, before he had finished his talk. It seemed to me, and still seems, rather a trifle to get so hot about, but then, as I have already said, I am not a scholar. Henry is really savage about it, and just as we were stepping into

the Pembroke Arms he delivered his final word. 'Our late Prime Minister', he said, 'once declared that he did not know what a gangster was till he went into politics. If, in the many and honoured years which we hope lie before him, he takes to the study of Antiquity he will find himself among familiar faces.' I exhibited gin, with a slice of lemon, and a large lump of ice.

But what is worrying me is this. Near Evercreech in Somerset there is a place called Chesterblade, so it must mean something. I wonder if I ought to tell Henry. The Greatest Living Authority may be keeping it up his sleeve to hit him with; and I shouldn't like Henry to be hurt.

NO SERVILE TENURE¹

MESSRS. DUCKWORTH continue to provide the public with short biographies which maintain an excellent standard of craftsmanship. I must not go on be-rating the Dirty Twenties, a topic to which, I am warned, my pen too frequently recurs. But I own it gives me a great deal of satisfaction to think that there is a growing market for sage and serious biography, and that there should be so many writers capable of meeting the demand.

Of the latest volumes in the series, two have interested me particularly. One is Lady Pansy Pakenham's *Charles I*, a book which goes at its subject with a warm and fearless directness which I find admirable. The resulting figure may not be the whole Charles, but it is a very real Charles: and if at times the writer seems to exchange the pen for the shillelagh, I do not know that she is any the worse exponent of an age which ranked Indifference and Neutrality with Heresy and Profaneness, as things equally detestable. Some of my contemporaries may recall the subdued ecstasy with which we used to receive the intimation that once the poet Shakespeare so far forgot his dramatic impariawltiy as to place in the mouth of John of Gaunt a warrum eulogy on the British People. But without imagination neither drama nor history nor biography can be written. And will the imagination ever be neutral? I doubt it. But if it can, then it had better keep clear of the seventeenth century.

¹ *Charles I*, by Pansy Pakenham; *Peel*, by G. Kitson Clark.

And the nineteenth, because there the ashes of old controversy are even hotter to the foot. In Mr. Kitson Clark's book I seem to feel a certain straining after impartiality, which at times relieves itself in an ungainly skittishness. It is a pity, because Mr. Clark is not a writer who needs to call attention to himself by throwing up his heels: he is only dull when he tries to be bright; and his serious judgments are always worth considering and often most aptly expressed. 'Peel's better qualities', he says, when speaking of his early Irish Secretaryship, 'do not appear in his general conceptions, which were often commonplace. But because, like an able artificer, Peel always thought with his hands, his true quality appears in his administration.' And again: 'He kept tight hold of the ordinary Tory difficulties and arguments, for he took them seriously. But he also took seriously the arguments of his opponents: he was not simply content to parry them: he was sensitive to the moral challenge behind them.' A great deal of Sir Robert is implicit in those well-considered sentences, and I have others marked. But, just from want, I think, of imaginative sympathy, Mr. Clark does not quite succeed in building his views into a portrait, and the result is less a book about Peel than a book round about him. We observe by turns his capacity, his unoriginality, his masterful steadiness, his curious and delicate sensibility. But the great Sir Robert Peel does not appear. Mr. Clark set me reading again what I have always regarded as a masterpiece of compact narrative — George Peel's article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The portrait which there emerges is really clearer, and the reason is that it

is drawn with the confidence of a warm and unconcealed regard.

But what surprised me, reading these two books one after the other, was to find myself running parallels between Charles and Peel. Voices seemed to be calling and answering each other out of the centuries. 'No man ever went about to break Parliament, but in the end Parliament broke him.' That is Eliot in 1629, but – substitute Party for Parliament, and it might be Lord George Bentinck in 1845. The explanation, of course, lies not in the character of the King and the statesman – though there again I found myself drawing comparisons – but in their situation. The position of the Sole Person, be it the King in Parliament or the Leader in his Party, must in the nature of things be the focus of analogous relations, and in Charles's day, as in Peel's, they had not been stabilized or regulated by experiment and the process of time. Of the King, a Cavalier wrote: 'He had a greatness of mind not to live precariously by his subjects.' Put followers for subjects and you have Peel. 'I do not desire to be Minister of England; but while I am Minister of England I will hold office by no servile tenure. I will hold office unshackled by any other obligation than that of consulting the public interests and providing for the public safety.' Put King for Minister, and you have Charles. One might go further. In their fine culture, the long love-story of their married lives, their earnest desire for the well-being of the people – a desire in practice found compatible with slitting Prynne's ears and opposing Fielden's Factory Bill – the two men seem constantly to touch and overlap. Both of them were men of the past. Charles was a belated

Tudor without the Tudor genius, and Peel, who, as a Harrow boy, had heard Mr. Fox replying to Mr. Pitt, belonged, as Mr. Clark excellently says, to the age of senatorial rather than of representative government.

There is a difference indeed. There have been many abler kings than Charles. But in the whole record of our public life, has there ever been anything to match the magnificent ability of Peel? Ability, not genius. Bagehot called him a second-class man, and Bagehot was not often wrong. There is something missing, which has kept him out of that high place reserved in a nation's memory for those in whom it was not missing – for Fox and both the Pitts, for Gladstone and Disraeli. Above all, he lacked the gift with which both his great assailant and his great disciple were so richly endowed, the gift of long, far-sighted, fertile meditation, and no party, therefore, has taken his memory into its care. In one way his early introduction to office – he was Chief Secretary at twenty-four – was unfortunate. He was cradled in minute paper, and throughout his life, the memorandum was his most natural mode of utterance. Returning from Ireland, he deliberately avoided office for some years, while he was practising himself in the arts of debate, and acquiring that mastery of Parliamentary strategy and tactics which was to make him, in Disraeli's words, 'the greatest member of Parliament that ever lived'. When he returned to office, at the age of thirty-seven, in 1825, he was the Complete Statesman. His party had been in power as long as most people could remember, and there seemed no reason why they should not be there for ever. They had recovered from the panic, and the country had

recovered from the depression, which had followed the end of the war. Their legislation and administration were of the first quality; one could hardly wish England a better fortune than to have Peel always at the Home Office, Palmerston at the War Office, and Huskisson at the Board of Trade. Whether to have Canning always at the Foreign Office, planting banners on the remembered heights of Lisbon, and calling new worlds into existence to redress the balance of the old, would be a price worth paying, is a question on which opinions may lawfully differ.

Canning once, in a fit of petulance which intelligent Tories can well understand, spoke of 'the stupid old Tory party'. 'To use an odious word', Peel wrote to a friend, 'the tone of public opinion is more liberal than that of the government.' But if your own side is stupid and the other odious, what course are you to pursue? To a Canning or a Disraeli – and even Gladstone did not always find his followers wholly intelligent or sympathetic – the answer is clear: you must educate your party. You must see to it that, when an issue emerges and a conflict is inevitable, they meet it with a programme, a policy, a philosophy: with the ideas of to-day or to-morrow, not those of the day before yesterday. This was what Peel could not do. He accepted the Tory position, which implied the permanent subjection of the Catholics in Ireland, the exclusion of the Nonconformists in England from municipal office, the maintenance of an unreformed representation. Within limits, he made it his own. But it was for him and not the party to say what those limits were. When, therefore, convinced by the logic of facts,

he conceded Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Test Act, he surrounded his name with a volume of party obloquy which to a man of his temperament must have been an agony. Nearly twenty years later, admittedly the first man in England, as England, thanks in no small measure to his good sense and good faith, was the first country in the world, he would whiten at the ill-conditioned yell from his own back-benches: 'Who killed Mr. Canning?'

He recovered his credit with his party by the steady opposition he offered to the Reform Bill, and nearly lost it again by his tranquil acceptance of the Reform Act as the definite solution of a great constitutional problem. This is the Peel of the thirties, distrusted by all those 'stern, unbending Tories who follow, mutinously and reluctantly, a leader whose experience and eloquence are indispensable to them, but whose cautious temper and moderate opinions they abhor'. This is the Peel whose advent to office the young Queen contemplated with something like terror. And this is the Peel whom the country demanded in 1841, as emphatically as it had, in even darker days, called on Pitt, and on his son, to end the disorders of the State. In ten years, a leader whose relations with his party were very largely governed by mutual aversion, disdain on one side answering suspicion on the other, had rebuilt that party and re-established it in power. Five years later, it broke in his hands. But, pass over not five years but nine; think, not of the Repeal of the Corn Laws or the triumphant audacity of the great Budgets, but of the day when a sudden hush, as of all men speaking in whispers, fell on London; and a journalist,

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going about his business, saw working men and women sobbing at their doors because the great Sir Robert Peel was dead. 'People', he once wrote, 'like to feel that they are being governed,' and the people of England knew that they had never been governed by a man more resolute or more sincere in all that concerned the public interest and the public safety.

B. A. KOHNFELDT¹

THE scale on which the volumes in Messrs. Duckworth's biographical series are composed requires us to take them rather as essays, somewhat in the manner practised by the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* reviewers a hundred years ago. Judged by this standard, Mr. Beeley's brief Life must be pronounced excellent, leaving one only with the regret that he had not a larger space within which to show his gifts. The narrative is compact, and the judgments, on Disraeli and such others as cross the little stage, are framed with good sense and always delivered with good taste.

I was recently talking with an old Gladstonian whose recollections go back to the death of Palmerston and the election of 1868. 'What was it', I asked him, 'that made your generation so profoundly distrustful of Disraeli?' His answer surprised me somewhat. 'His early Radicalism.' Memories were longer in those days, of course, when the electorate was small, newspapers dear, and tradition was propagated, very largely, by conversation within a closed and responsible circle. The most telling stroke Disraeli himself ever delivered was aimed in 1845 against the Peel of 1828, before an audience to whom Catholic Emancipation and the wrongs of Mr. Canning were still living and present recollections. But my friend was right. Disraeli had more to live down than his fantastic attire and his Jewish blood: even in 1868, he was

¹ *Disraeli*, by Harold Beeley.

still remembered as the man who had stood in with O'Connell and the Radicals in 1832, who had suddenly discovered the superior advantages of Lord Lyndhurst's patronage in 1835, and who was at least suspected of having purchased those advantages by surrendering his mistress to a man twice his own age. To be diabolically clever, as his books and conversation showed him to be, is not in itself the best passport to political success. To be ridiculous, and to be thought immoral to boot, is weight enough to drown a man. It was simply impossible for Peel to give him office in 1841. What place was there for this belated young Regency rip among those virtuous youths, Canning, Lincoln, Gladstone, Sidney Herbert, who would call themselves, some day, by no other name than Friends of the Late Sir Robert Peel?

'The bitterest and least sincere of Peel's adversaries.' So Morley, speaking in the Peelite tradition, characterized the man who had described Conservative Government as 'an organized hypocrisy'. A generation which has rediscovered that Protection and Free Trade are not principles but expedients, can afford to take the great controversies of the past more coolly. The bitterest? 'It is impossible for me to deny that there is too much ground for the reproaches of those who, having a second time trusted the Right Honourable Baronet, find themselves a second time deluded. I cannot but see that it has been too much his practice, when in opposition, to make use of passions with which he has not the slightest sympathy, and of prejudices which he regards with profound contempt. As soon as he is in favour a change takes place. The instruments which have done his work are flung

aside. The ladder by which he has climbed is kicked down. I am forced to say that the Right Honourable Baronet acts thus habitually and on system. The natural consequences follow. All those fiercest spirits whom you hallooed on to harass us, now turn round and begin to worry you. Did you think the day of reckoning would never come? It has come. There you sit, doing penance for the disingenuousness of years.' Bitterer words have hardly ever been spoken in the House of Commons. But they are not Disraeli's words. They are Macaulay's. The topic is the Maynooth Grant, and not Protection at all. But they contain the substance of all that Disraeli ever said on those famous nights when the House rocked and Peel sat frozen into helplessness under the icy blast of his invective. The ladder by which Peel had climbed was the Tory gentry; the instrument which had done his work was the Landed Interest; and the passions with which he had no sympathy, the prejudices which he regarded with such contempt, were the prejudices and passions of his own party.

Peel fell, and the Gentlemen of England found themselves with Disraeli on their hands, stabilized somewhat by his quaint and perfect marriage and his alliance with Lord George Bentinck, but still neither liked nor trusted. So the years passed; a scramble into office and out again in 1852, in and out again in 1858 and 1859, but never into power. 'For twenty-two years', Mr. Beeley writes, 'he accepted the position of chief mate, creating by his patience and loyalty a claim to the captaincy which in the end the Tories could not decently ignore.' But by then he was sixty-four. Once, indeed, a great chance seemed

to have been put, not into his hands, it is true, but into Derby's. Suppose Derby had consented to form a Government in 1855, with Disraeli leading the Commons – Disraeli, at fifty-one, with the high aspirations of Young England, a little faded, perhaps, but not yet worn out in the endless criss-cross of coalitions and Franchise Bills? But in 1855 the country wanted Palmerston, as definitely as it wanted Pitt in 1756, and Derby knew it. In 1858 came another chance, and this time it was Disraeli who threw it away. Mr. Beeley has no light to shed on the most unaccountable error of his career. In its second year the Derby Administration was attacked on the ground that it had failed to preserve the peace of Europe. They had, in Lord Malmesbury's dispatches, a complete answer. The answer was in print. Disraeli declined to circulate it, and they were out for another seven years.

When he became Prime Minister in 1868, Disraeli had less than three years of office behind him, and only six to come. First and last, Gladstone had over twenty-five. A Lord of the Treasury while Disraeli was still wavering between Radicals and Tories, love, fashion, and epic poetry, when Gladstone last left office Disraeli was already fading into history. Peace with Honour, Cyprus, the Fleet in Besika Bay, Indian troops at Malta, the Queen an Empress among Emperors; England had rejected his Imperialism and his diplomacy alike. A Socialist came to him in his last days to expound the natural affinity of Socialism and Conservatism. 'You can never do it', the old man warned him, 'with the Conservative Party. They would thwart you at every turn. They and their women.' But whether it was they, or

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their women, or Peel, or Derby, he had been thwarted. Compared with the majestic evolution of Mr. Gladstone into the world-honoured figure of 1898, Disraeli's career is as strangely fragmentary as it is persistent. He got all that he wanted to get, but he did little that he meant to do. His early writings are rich in political wisdom, and richer perhaps in political suggestion. Read them, and you will soon see why, at political gatherings still, a reference to the greatest leader this great party has ever had is as sure of its round of cheers as a reference to Mr. Pitt in the days of Cousin Feenix.

One day last summer, like Matthew Arnold,

I saw the meeting of two
Gifted women.

Somehow the conversation got on to the topic: 'Suppose the garden boy came in, with the message: "there's one of the Prime Ministers at the gate, but I didn't catch his name, not rightly", which should we wish it to be?' No one wanted Gladstone. The Colonel hoped it would be Pam, having certain views on foreign policy for which he desired a more sympathetic audience than the company provided. If it were Peel, they said, I might have him to myself, and I should like nothing better than an hour alone with Peel. The men were afraid that Canning would talk them down. Johnny, we agreed, would start pouring himself out a cup of tea without noticing that anyone else was there. But the better half were unanimous for Disraeli. 'After all', said one, 'he is the only man I could ever have married.' 'Do you know', cooed the other, 'he once kissed me?' For

one tense moment we all thought that the scene would close with slapped faces and pulled hair: but someone was inspired to quote.

Esser baciata da cotanto amante,

and peace was preserved.

Yes, but consider his time in office, and what he did with it. There are brilliant feats of Parliamentary strategy and tactics; in 1858, when

the whole of the Opposition benches became one great dissolving view of anarchy,

and again over the passage of the Reform Bill of 1867. But at seventy, in power at last, he was losing his political mastery. 'He that runs against time has an antagonist not subject to casualty.' In history, the Parliament of 1874-80 deserves to be known for its legislation as the Useful Parliament. But Cross did the work, and the leadership of the House slipped into the avid but inadequate hands of Northcote, while the old Jew dreamed Imperially and made love to ladies little younger than himself. Below the ashes there was still a fire. Bismarck, who could measure a man, saw that Excellenz B. A. Kohnfeldt, as the street humorists of Berlin called him, meant business, and there was not a tremor in the hand that began the never-finished portrait of Joseph Toplady Falconet.

Rosebery once had the audacity to ask Joseph Toplady what he really thought of Peel. 'He was not,' the old man said severely, 'quite a gentleman. He corresponded

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with Under-Secretaries direct.' It would be far more interesting to know 'what he really thought of Disraeli. In the index to Morley's *Life*, two entries stand in piquant juxtaposition:

Beaconsfield: tribute from Gladstone.

Beaconsfield: deterioration in public life due to.

What searchings of heart that tribute cost, readers of Lord Acton's letters will remember. The other, delivered to a smaller, and perhaps a more submissive, audience, was at least unambiguous: 'Democracy has not saved us from a distinct decline in the standard of public men. For all this deterioration one man and one man only is responsible – Disraeli. He is the Grand Corruptor.' Ages hence, students of our dead tongue in Lhasa or Melanesia will learn from the *Oxford Dictionary* that his name is associated especially with 'an odious system of bluster and swagger, and might against right'. But if they study the man in his career, they may think that in the essentials of virtue, in sincerity of mind and kindliness of heart, he did not fall conspicuously short, even when measured by the standard of his sainted antagonist; and, if they pursue him to his books, they will find themselves in converse, not perhaps with the most vigorous, and not the most massive, but the most trenchant and sensitive intellect that has ever applied itself to the government of England.

THE SCHOOLMAN IN DOWNING STREET¹

ONCE upon a time, two examiners were setting a paper on the Napoleonic Period. One of them produced: '(7) How many nations were engaged in the Battle of Leipzig, and what were the losses of each in killed, wounded, and prisoners?' 'Oh come', said the other (and I need not indicate, I hope, to which University he belonged), 'you can't ask them that.' 'Why not?' said the first, with some surprise: 'I'm sure they won't know the answer.'

If I wanted to trip up an examinee who offered the Nineteenth Century, I should ask him to say what Mr. Gladstone's political position was on Christmas Day in each of the ten years following the death of Peel. If my object was the more humane one of giving him a chance to show what he knew, I should put the question thus: What was Gladstonian Liberalism, and how did Mr. Gladstone get there? But the candidate who wishes to be prepared for either event, will find in Mr. Garratt's book competent guidance through the material intricacies, and many suggestive judgments on the spiritual convolutions, of an exceedingly tortuous career.

The theme of his book is the duality in Mr. Gladstone's nature: Liverpool below, Oxford on top; or, the Highlander handcuffed to a Lowlander; not, by any means, as will be seen, an original topic, but worked out in an original way, with much confirming detail. I do not mean

¹ *The Two Mr. Gladstones*, by G. T. Garratt.

to follow Mr. Garratt over the whole course, but I should like to dwell a little on the Mr. Oxford of his portrait: 'an ascetic scholar, a High Churchman with celibate leanings and a deep love of recondite theological arguments. He looked upon human beings as souls to be saved, and distrusted the economic theorizings of laymen. He longed for a definite mission, one which involved self-sacrifice, and found it in Ireland.' There is certainly much truth in this analysis, but it leaves out, I think, one of the most important elements in the make-up of Mr. Oxford, and that is Oxford.

About the year 1830 a visitor to Christ Church, who had pushed open the door of the lecture room next to the hall staircase, would have seen assembled two head masters to be; three bishops; three Regius professors; three viceroys, Canning, Dalhousie and Elgin; Gladstone, Newcastle, and Cornewall Lewis. Lowe sometimes looked in, and Sidney Herbert regularly came across from Oriel. They sat there translating Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in turn at the feet of Mr. Biscoe. He is little known to fame, but what villatic fowl ever hatched such a brood of eaglets? Among them was Martin Tupper, to whom we owe the roll of names.

Take now a young man of genius, trained at home in habits of friendly disputation and regular piety, always bracing himself to the evangelical standards of personal holiness; in all his social and intellectual relations of a most vivid and energetic disposition; subject him, in the most congenial surroundings, among contemporaries of the governing class, to a persistent discipline in scholarship, logic, and history; and above all, make him translate

Aristotle aloud. What will be the result? To my recollection, Aristotle imposes himself on a young reader first by his determination to settle his meanings before he starts reasoning from them: and then by the resoluteness, often ungainly, often long-winded, often involved, with which he pursues his argument to the end: the parentheses, admissions, and qualifications into which he is always dropping being so many safeguards against interruption or misconception by the way. But our young man has also brought with him, from home or Eton, a gift or habit of words, vast, nebulous and resonant, recalling the Biscayan roll of the younger Pitt. Allow for that: and then tell me, have I not described the regular movement of Mr. Gladstone's mind, on the platform, in Committee, or in those analytic and deductive memoranda which the poor Queen had to have translated before she could make head or tail of them? Morley permits himself a distant smile over the fervour with which the Peelites debated where they ought to sit. 'Taking a seat', Mr. Gladstone said, 'is an external sign and pledge that ought to follow upon full conviction of the thing it was understood to betoken.' That is not the language of this world. But it is the phraseology of the Schools, and in particular, of the Divinity Schools: in the great Eucharistic controversy which sprang up when Pusey was silenced by the Heads of Houses in 1843, the contrast of 'external sign and pledge' and 'that which it betokens', was part of the staple of the argument. But dazzled by excess of light, and perplexed by excess of definition, the baffled mind grows suspicious, and, when dreamer and fanatic no longer meet the case, the mutter of Sophist is heard. To

no two figures in our history, I suppose, has the name been so persistently applied as to Gladstone and Newman: potent and mysterious figures, their outlines obscured by the very brilliance of their dialectic.

Often when I am reading Newman, an unholy analogy presents itself, and, as he would have said, 'stains my imagination'. I cannot help thinking of those African virgins who in Gibbon's language, 'admitted priests and deacons to their bed, and gloried amidst the flames in their unsullied purity'. He is always skimming along the verge of a logical catastrophe, and always relying on his dialectic agility to save himself from falling: always exposing what seems to be an unguarded spot, and always revealing a new line of defence when the unwary assailant has reached it. I am not sure it is not a general characteristic of Oxford: we are not the children of Ockham for nothing: and we are all, I think, more ready to take intellectual risks than they are at 'the less ancient and splendid' place, trusting to Aristotle to inspire us with the right mood and figure when needed, and so to preserve 'the unsullied purity' of our reasoning.

The content was very different, but in what may be called the articulation of their minds, their routes from point to point, Gladstone and Newman were not at all unlike. Morley admitted that Gladstone had a habit of using words in a sense they could be grammatically made to carry, knowing all the time that his hearers would take them in another; but if I wanted to illustrate this habit, or this gift, it is to Newman that I should first turn.

‘What are the humble monk, and the holy nun, but Christians after the very pattern given us in Scripture? Did our Saviour come on earth suddenly, in whom would He see the features of the Christians He and His Apostles left behind them, but in them?’

It is provocative. It is meant to make Mr. Bull put his head down and charge,

Charge for the hearth of Vesta!

and the holiness of the domestic affections. Newman side-steps. ‘What I said was: “If He does not find pattern Christians among monks and nuns, He will find them nowhere.” But He will find them among monks and nuns. Therefore, obviously, He may find them elsewhere: in Mrs. Bull, for example, and in some (I hope) of the little Bulls. Really, my poor Cambridge friend, there is nothing to make such a noise about.’

Meeting last year in the gay and congenial air of Blackpool, the British Association discussed the popularity of Giant Racers, and concluded that they gratify the Fear-Escape Propensity (this is their English:

For God’s sake, reader, take it not for mine) giving their devotees the sensations of acute peril and perfect security at once. The man who is endowed, over-endowed it may be, with dialectic astuteness, is very apt to keep himself in practice by taking up indefensible positions for the fun of defending them: practice makes perfect, and without some restraining sense of responsibility – well, Mr. Bernard Shaw’s dialogues on the Abdication point the moral. Gladstone had a strong and carefully cultivated sense of responsibility – its cultivation being at times

even more obtrusive than its natural strength – but every now and then the 'sophist has to have his run on the Racer, in the matter of the Ewelme Rectory for example, for which really one can find no other explanation than that he wanted to see how fast he could take a corner without crashing. Parliament had said that the Rector of Ewelme must be an Oxford man – dark blue, you know, and that sort of thing. But any Cambridge man can become a member of the other University by incorporation. So Gladstone picked a Cambridge man, saw that he was incorporated, made him Rector of Ewelme, and presented him to Parliament and the world as an Oxford man. Even the faithful Morley has to wish that he hadn't.

Yet in the end both men won their way to honour and even reverence. Newman in the *Apologia* took the whole of educated England into his confidence. Gladstone threw himself on the warm-hearted, close-thinking, hard-fighting Liberalism of the North, and told it what it wanted to hear in the accents of a great actor who has found his part at last. But the instrument with which he worked had been forged and tempered in the Schools of Oxford. It was a dangerous instrument, especially for a man in whose mind the boundaries of self-conviction and self-deception were so feebly guarded. No one has wielded it since: no one to-day rises from such subtle and laborious argument to such majestic denunciation or appeal:

nec rapit immensos orbes per humum, neque tan tam
squameus in spiram surgens se colligit anguis.

He carried it with him into history, and perhaps it is as well for us that he did.

T O P S Y ¹

THESE two volumes, supplementary to the sixteen issued over twenty years ago, complete the publication of William Morris's writings. Except Ruskin, no writer of the Victorian age has been so loyally served and so carefully laid up for posterity. Whether the time has come for a decisive valuation of his work is, perhaps, to be doubted. More than sixty years ago a sharp-eyed critic, writing of the *Germ* and the earliest pre-Raphaelite poetry, had occasion to speak also of Morris's *Jason*. He quoted the lines:

Meanwhile, all men spoke hotly of the quest,
And healths they drank to many an honoured man,
Until the moon sank and the stars waxed wan,
And from the east faint yellow light outshone,
O'er the Greek sea, so many years ago:

and added the comment: 'No one can deny the magic. But it will not last. At least, in well-regulated minds it will not.' Possibly I have an ill-regulated mind, but I own that criticism of this kind, which calls up the image of a governess bidding her young charges not to be fanciful, irritates me. I find it simpler, and really more illuminating, to say that *The Earthly Paradise* appeared in four volumes between 1868 and 1870, and that it had been reprinted seven times before I read it, all one July, in an enchantment such as no other book has ever cast

¹ *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, by May Morris.

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on me, except, when I was a child, the *Mort Darthur*, and, later, the *Odyssey*. First of April poetry, if you like, as Bagehot said of Shakespeare's Sonnets. Still, April comes but once a year, and why should we neglect its blessings while they are with us, or despise them when October is drawing near?

Christ guard the Hollow Land,
All the sweet spring-tide!

The criticism of poetry is not my trade, but this much, I think, one can say with confidence, that, like Byron, Morris is a poet who must be taken in bulk or left alone; and that what is admirable and memorable in his work is not the intensity, but the diffusion of his poetic mood. His poetry, and to the verse one must add the prose romances, is a complete world, and, 'taken as a whole', Earle Welby said with much truth in *The Victorian Romantics*, 'it is the sanest and most happily ordered world that any modern English writer has made'. At the centre of this world was a personality by no means simple, but in all its intricacies definite, and in all its activities bounded by that 'wiry outline' which Blake demanded of the draftsman. It is amusing to compare the demeanour of Ruskin and Morris before a Royal Commission. Ruskin having said his piece, is all at sea; Morris knows what he is about from the first question to the last. In his Introductory Essay, very entertaining and very mischievous, 'On Morris as I knew him', Mr. Shaw speaks of the 'extraordinary integrity of his taste'. Welby, quoting

T O P S Y

Many scarlet bricks there were
In its walls, and old grey stone,
Over which ripe apples shone
At the right time of the year,

adds: 'if ever a single word gave us a poet's attitude to the world, the epithet "right" gives us the attitude of Morris.' 'What is irresistible in Morris', a German critic has written, 'is the tangible character of his productions. Here culture takes a visible form and becomes reality; one sound mind working for the comfort of other sound minds.' The same masterful and genial precision appears in the technical papers which his daughter and pupil has reprinted. You may think he is wrong. But there is never any doubt what he is after.

Definiteness implies limitation; and in art, in literature, in public affairs, there was much that Morris could not grasp, and much that he could not see. Neither he nor his master, Ruskin, really apprehended, or even faced, the problem of machinery, though, when it came his way, Ruskin could declaim as magnificently on steam engines as on clouds or waterfalls. Speaking of Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Morris warns his readers that every Utopia must be regarded as the expression of the writer's temperament, and very shrewdly he observes, of reformers of another brand, that they aimed at turning the working classes into middle classes. Perhaps he was thinking of Fawcett, who seriously looked forward to a time, not far distant, when they would all be so respectable that we should have to import negroes and Chinese to do the dirty work. But if we said that Morris wanted

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to turn them all into Old English Yeomen, should we be so far from the mark? In Russian galleries, I am told, pictures are now labelled:

Taste of the financial *bourgeoisie*,
Taste of the Imperialist *rentier*,

and so forth; and not long ago a Russian architect, observing our objection to Ribbon Development, acutely diagnosed it as a symptom of Bourgeois Ideology. He was quite right. If we must use ugly and rather silly words, our common ideology is *bourgeois*.

But one of the most serviceable clues to the tangled pattern of Victorian history is the steady resistance of the country-minded *bourgeoisie*, commonly called gentry, and entrenched in the Universities and the Church, to the encroachments of the town-minded *bourgeoisie*. Wisely, Miss Morris places in the forefront of her introduction a chapter on country life. Morris belonged by birth to the rural stock, the stock of Kingsley and Hughes. He was educated nominally at Marlborough, and really in Savernake and on the Marlborough Downs. He went up to Oxford when Oxford and the English country scene were at the peak of their pride and beauty. He might very well have become a parson, a fighting, reforming, cricket-playing parson of the type of Sydney Godolphin Osborne. He chose to be a designer. But he must have an abbey to design in. He built himself one country house among the Kentish orchards. He took another in the heart of that lovely and still lonely land where the spire of Lechlade looks up to the tower of Highworth; of the ridge under Faringdon he writes: 'the hills are low but well

designed', a proper compliment from one artist to another. Mr. Shaw tells us that no Fabian ever bothered about *News from Nowhere*. Indeed, it has little connection with any topic that is ever likely to figure on the agenda of the L.C.C., and it bears, all too plainly for utilitarian approval, the rubric:

Taste of the Squire.

Of the world of Morris one can say, as the man from the Lincolnshire wolds said of wooded Nottinghamshire: 'a very good country for gentlemen,' and the prospect, one fears, of having to catch its own dinner and eating it in tapestried chambers by candlelight, drinking claret, and listening to poetry, would almost certainly give the proletariat what the proletariat would call the Ump. But Morris was an inventor, a creative craftsman, of astonishing vigour and fertility, rejoicing in the work of his hands, and, by a natural and generous illusion, he believed that if others could be brought to rejoice also, their work would be as good as his. 'There is a tendency deeply implanted in our best impulses, by which men are moved to make others partners of whatever good they themselves possess, to abnegate all superiority and disclose the very secret spring of it.' I do not think Morris would have rejected this as a statement of his own philosophy of life and society, though it did appear in that Tory organ the *Quarterly Review*, and the writer was Regius Professor of Theology in the *bourgeois* University of Oxford.

It is to be borne in mind, too, that Morris was not only an extremely capable man; like Owen and

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Ruskin before him, he was, in his vocation, a highly successful one. Owen in our day would have commanded any salary he liked to name as managing director of a combine. Ruskin, having given away one fortune, made another by a raid on the book market of the kind which is called unscrupulous by those who have not thought of it first. Morris was barely thirty when he was commissioned to decorate St. James's Palace, and on Tennyson's death he was sounded for the Laureateship, having in the interim been up for fighting the police. He descended into the arena from an assured and lofty place both in literature and art. A descent it was. Torn from his moorings in the great political storm of 1878, the harbour in which he found refuge was not the true Tiber:

longa procul longis via dividit invia terris.

With the gift of prophecy denied to contemporaries, the historian can now see that the way led through Westminster and not through Trafalgar Square: not through revolution but through the orderly development of the legislation of the seventies. But it was not the way for a positive, combative man, whose imagination, for all his positiveness, was filled with the vision of guilds and common halls, and white villages by unpolluted streams.

Morris in his day was a great power in the world of art and poetry. Now that his day has passed into history, how are we to think of him? A great man, doubtless, and as he is drawn for us in these volumes, less by design than by instinctive sympathy and skill, by incident and comment and reminiscence, a man of uncommon breadth and

stature: deep-hearted, laborious, fiery. History needed such a man to close the long succession of those who fought, all through the years of industrialism triumphant, to keep some place for art and beauty in a world grown bleak and grey. Before he was born the battle was set between the disciples of Coleridge and the disciples of Bentham. When he was a schoolboy Chartist halls were singing Massey's 'Hymn to Labour', with its refrain:

Come, let us worship Beauty.

Young England and the Christian Socialists added their voices to the chorus, and it was from a famous chapter of *The Stones of Venice* that Morris drew his first inspiration. We may be sorry – it is impossible not to be sorry – that he did not remain above and aloof from party strife, content to be the poet and prophet of English Socialism, without involving himself in the Athanasian complexities of its fissiparous federations. But he could no more have taken up the mantle of Ruskin than he could have followed Millais or Leighton down the primrose path to a baronetcy or the House of Lords. His Socialism was the final synthesis of all his purposes: and without it his character would have been unfinished, his life incomplete.

OUT OF THE TWILIGHT: INTO THE FOG¹

IT is one of the curiosities of history that the reign of Queen Victoria should have opened with Radicals triumphing over the defeat of our arms in Canada, and ended with Radicals not less exultant over disasters in South Africa. In 1837 Whiggery, in 1901 Imperialism was visibly waning, both in power and popularity, and a great reversal was impending. It came in 1906, and not since 1880 had the sun of Liberalism shone on such a victory. When Balfour rose in the new House, he was greeted with shouts of happy laughter from the victors, one of whom further emphasized his acquaintance with Parliamentary ways by addressing himself to Mr. Chairman and gentlemen. Like Swift, two hundred years before, we felt that we had seen the utter overthrow of the Tory Party. Where is that party to-day? Well, as a matter of fact, it is in office with every likelihood of staying there. But where is Liberalism to be found? What was Liberalism?

The history of that party which under various transformations followed Russell, Gladstone, Asquith, and Mr. Lloyd George was concerned mainly with the abatement of political privilege, ecclesiastical ascendancy, and racial domination. The first Reform Act, the disestablishment of the Irish Church, and the restoration of self-government to the South African Republics were

¹ *Forward from Liberalism*, by Stephen Spender.

typically Liberal measures. By the beginning of this century political privilege was disappearing so fast that the Liberals were getting near to the end of their domestic programme. But economic privilege, the ascendancy of the employing class over the employed, remained. Whether things were actually better or worse in 1906 than in 1856 is a not very important or even intelligent question, because the men of 1906 were not living in 1856. It is like asking whether a boiled egg is better or worse than a mutton chop: all depends on the time of day. The real difference was that in 1856 the bulk of educated opinion held that what was wrong was remediable within the existing framework of things: in the body politic, as in the natural body, the *vis medicatrix naturae* could be trusted. By 1906 a considerable volume of opinion had come to the conclusion that it could not: that organic change was needed; that economic privilege was the mischief, and that it would only grow worse with time and must be removed by operation.

So put, the issue seems clearer than in practice any issue can possibly be. My recollection is that it was clearer to the Tory than to the Liberal mind, not from any superior acuity of vision, with which indeed Tories are not eminently endowed, but simply because the main economic privilege which they had once possessed, namely, landed wealth, had either gone, or was going, as fast as the political privileges of the Church and the aristocracy. We – I may as well let my political predilections out for a run now and then – we were rather inclined, remembering Bolingbroke and Disraeli and Lord Randolph, to dress ourselves up as dispossessed

lords who would some day come back and deliver the commonalty from the upstarts who were exploiting them. I suppose it is different now, when all the young gentlemen learn economics and go into business, but in those days no Tory, of whatever rank or class, ever thought of a merely moneyed man as his social equal. We didn't touch our hats. We only scratched our heads.

The agricultural depression, following the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, preserved the vitality of the Tory principle by delivering the party from its 'Mezentian alliance' with a material interest; while, on the other hand, the torpor, the *status lymphaticus*, the paralysis of Liberalism, was induced by too intimate an association with the dying materialism of Victorian industry. Again the parallel with those early Whigs obtrudes itself: both had exhausted their ideas, and nothing but an injection of new doctrine could keep them awake. It was said of Asquith that he had added nothing to the general body of Liberal opinion. But, since they gave up singing the Land Song, has anyone added anything to the body of Liberal opinion? Liberalism has always been a much better balanced, a more logical creed than its rival: it had, of course, the great advantage of being moulded in its early days under the logical pressure of Philosophic Radicalism: the statement of present-day Liberal doctrine, which Mr. Spender prints on page 52, has a curiously archaic quality, as if the elder Mill, and the younger Mill, and Bright and Gladstone had all had a hand in drafting it. But the more compact a system is, the greater the difficulty it finds in admitting a new element. One sees this when, in the

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later nineteenth century, the Empire became a public topic. The Tories knocked up a policy – largely out of Radical materials – while the Liberals were looking for the place in the book.

Mr. Spender, who bears a name honoured in Liberal tradition, writes of Liberalism in a tone of disappointed wrath, as a nephew might write of an uncle from whom he had great expectations, but who had taken to evil courses, and wasted the ancestral estate. His history sometimes makes me stare, and his economics sometimes make me gasp. He rambles, he repeats himself, and, unlike most poets, he writes very poor prose. Of course, in an age when we have a Cabinet which says *when-ever* when it means *as soon as*, one does not pitch one's expectations high. But even so, one might fairly ask a professed man of letters for something less pedestrian than this:

•

The small oligarchy of big business interests has not been averse from encouraging the superstition that Liberal Democracy is identical with Freedom: in this way it has won the support even of its political opponents.

[This reminds me of Cobbett's saying: 'When I see several *its* on a page, I tremble for the writer.']

On occasions even the political freedom which we do possess has been suspended in the name of this imaginary freedom, which the propagandists of the present system have pretended to be identical with that system. They have succeeded almost in persuading democracy

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that any radical change in the present system means a loss of freedom.

The contemporary awareness which we have we can by no means afford to lose; on the contrary, in an economically free society, we should make it far more popular than it is at present.

That is really a dreadful way to write English, betraying, I am afraid, an underlying slovenliness of thought. If Mr. Spender would listen to the advice of one much older and less wise than himself, I should say: practise yourself in definition. At present you seem to me to be using words less as tokens of ideas than as stakes to mark out the channels of a still turbid thought: and that is not the way to 'socialize the products' of your intelligence. Are you sure that you know what you mean by *bourgeois*, monopoly, vested interest, classical, romantic, imperialist, nationalist, and so forth? Because you sometimes leave me with a suspicion that you don't. And, if you must knock spots off the Warden of New College, believe me that it would be more effective, as well as more amusing, to take some trouble about it, than simply to borrow the idiom of Mr. Arthur Greenwood, and hoarsely bellow Humbug! four times in nine lines.

I should be sorry to see poets at the head of affairs, and I hope Mr. Spender is not nursing himself to be the Lamartine of 1949. But that they should concern themselves with affairs, writing discourses on the State of Ireland, and letters on the Convention of Cintra, is an admirable contrivance for shedding light on affairs, and

OUT OF THE TWILIGHT: INTO THE FOG

giving substance to poetry. The re-entry of our poets into the arena where Byron fought with convention and Shelley with ghosts is a thing to be welcomed, not deplored. In particular, it seems to me that the real issue of our time is one which in a peculiar degree needs exploration by the imaginative, receptive, experiencing mind such as we believe our poets to possess. Presumably we are by now all agreed that the only basis for a widely diffused culture is the economic security of the individual, a state of affairs which once or twice in the nineteenth century we sighted and then lost again; and the real question is whether such security is compatible with private ownership. But the moment we look at the conception of private property, we see that, in its economic and juristic bearings, it is a shifting conception. The ownership of land, for example, was more complete after the passing of the new Poor Law, than before, and before Harcourt's estate duties than after. The ownership of a mill imported greater power before Fielden's Act than since, and it was further limited by Cross's legislation in 1875. The incidents of urban ownership were very different before and after the Local Government Act of 1888. On the whole, the tendency has been towards a closer restriction of ownership as a legal status, and a wider diffusion of ownership as an economic status: while recent years have been particularly fertile in essays and experiments in new modes of corporate ownership and control.

Now, it is certainly open to anyone to argue that, all this being so, the continued existence of economic insecurity – implying, as I fully admit, a low level of

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civilization for a large part of the population – proves that the restraints on ownership, the abatement of economic privilege, have not gone far enough. But before we take the further step and acknowledge that ownership in itself is incompatible with civilization, we need a thorough-going study of ownership, not as a legal or economic arrangement, but as a mode of human personality. The attitudes to property are so various, the whole human tradition is so much mixed up with property, individual, corporate, domestic, tribal, sacred, and what not, that, by now, I should have supposed, the psychology of ownership must be even more intricate than the law or the economics. It is no good calling Sir Walter Citrine names, or giving yourself the airs of a martyr because the laws of your country do not yet allow you to be a persecutor. Imaginative thinking is wanted, and I am convinced that Mr. Spender would do more for his cause, if not for his side, and infinitely more for the truth, which is the cause of us all, if he would resume his singing robes, withdrawing, in his own words, ‘from the noise and fog’ of party traffic, and write a poem on the feelings of a taxi-man contemplating his own garage and his own sweet peas. I think the effort would teach him much that he has still to understand.

A LETTER TO A PERSON OF HONOUR

Dear A:

I am glad you have found some entertainment in my *Gibbon* and that it has provoked you to write. But in your strictures on Gibbon I think you have overlooked the Johnsonian canon which I quote: 'The *History of the Royal Society* is read not to see what they were doing but how their transactions are recorded by Sprat.' To be interested in books for their subject is an unhappy limitation of the mind, and pray take it not amiss if I say that (in this respect only) your observations remind me of a Peeress whom I once heard exclaim: 'Say, why does Lytton Strachey write about Crayton? He was ony a Bish Up.'

Or, to quote another friend of mine nearer to your own intellectual level, to whom I expressed the opinion that on the whole Maitland was the greatest of English historians, 'But he writes about going to law in King Stephen's time'. You, being yourself both a lawyer and a philosopher, can no doubt read and re-read the Introductions to the Year Books or the Pleas of the Crown in Gloucestershire with as much pleasure as I do, and far more comprehension. But is it not possible that your very interest in the subject-matter makes you less attentive to the workmanship, and that the proceedings of the Royal Society may absorb you to the neglect of Sprat?

Let me agree with you so far as to acknowledge that

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what little Miss Morland called 'history, real serious history,' or what 'your University calls Its Modern History, or Its Mediaeval History, or Its Ancient History is, in and by and for itself, the most utterly futile topic that can engage the mind of man. I believe too that there is no more baleful delusion than the fancy that history can furnish practical instruction in the present or guidance into the future, and no worse affliction can a nation be cursed with than a historic memory. That way De Valera lies. Have you ever considered how much happiness as a nation we owe to our habit of forgetting everything that occurred last week and assuming that everything before that was a win for our side? You know the account the Glastonbury man gave of his Abbey, that Oliver Cromwell put he up and William Norman pulled he down. Amen, and so be it: I say ditto to Mr. Burke. And I rejoice to think that all attempts to make it otherwise, and all attempters, from Trevelyan in his Chair to Miss Rhoda Power at her microphone, will be frustrated by our immovable incuriousness as to our own past.

Why then write history? The only answer I can see is that there are people who must write history or burst, and I have often wondered what this inner compulsion is, whether it is always the same in kind, and whether one can gauge it downwards, as one can in other functions, from genius to talent and so to honest humdrum. And there is one thing which strikes me at once. The most obvious trait of unity in the great historians is their intense apprehension of place. I have dwelt on this in my *Gibbon* because it seems to me to have been commonly neglected. To the true, the essentially historical

historian, I think you will find that the question Where did it happen? is as important as the question Who did it and why?

Of course other impulses are at work too: the primitive interest in origins and the primitive joy in spinning a yarn: the more recent pleasure in making a logical pattern: most recent of all, the professional pride in getting things right. Take Snorri, Clarendon, and Ranke as examples. But the lift, the *that*, which turns the most graphic saga, the most penetrating memoir, or the most judicious statement of facts into history, seems to me to be invariably this gift, or aptitude, or whatever you call it, of apprehension in time-space, of seeing every place as a travelling focus of events.

Given this endowment, the question What will he do with it? turns on the rest of the man's mental equipment, the resources and requirements of his age, and so forth, just as the central poetic or plastic impulse is conditioned in infinitely various ways. But I think it is a general rule that any strong impulse of this kind carries with it a kind of self-protective sense of framework, pattern, or limitation. The man does not really feel: I must write or burst, so much as: I must write and not burst. You remember Clive Bell's difficulty in explaining why a picture should be *about* anything, and, on his principles, it takes some explaining. The answer is that the subject is the limit, without which the impulse would be spent ineffectually.

Now Gibbon's limit is not your limit. Your complaint is that he has mapped the country-side, marked the turn-pikes, gentlemen's seats, market towns and places of

interest, but has omitted to say what the people inside were having for tea, which to you happens to be more interesting. Say, why did Gibbon write about Rome? It was only an Em Pire. I think Mr. Gibbon would have replied: 'My dear Sir, your interest in religion, science, philosophy, and institutions is the mark of a truly liberal and cultivated mind. My genius, I own, is of a more terrestrial sort, and I aspired to do no more than provide a truthful and coherent account of those material transactions which in my view, which of course may be mistaken, explain the evolution of the European system from the year 150 to the year 1450. To the development of ideas I must modestly acknowledge myself indifferent except in so far as they explain, or issue in, tangible events happening in certain places. The precise nature of Julian's belief has eluded me: you will I trust be more fortunate. But as I do not see that the profession, or even the conviction, of a different faith would have made any material alteration in the course of events, I considered myself dispensed from the obligation of pursuing an inquiry which for my purpose was curious rather than important. If I may follow you in a philosophic speculation for which indeed I am ill-fitted, I would say that there is, in scholastic language, a Being the essence of which is change. This being must be apprehended through its accidents, which are alone accessible to our inspection, and these accidents I would classify as primary and secondary. As a naturalist will, generally, attach more significance to the osseous structure of an extinct species than to its colour or the texture of its skin, so the historian must, generally, direct his attention principally

to wars and migrations and the political revolutions of states. But it is a necessary part of his profession to be able to determine what in any age is primary and what is secondary, and I am not conscious of neglecting in my narrative any tendency of thought, any development of law or institutions, which seemed to me to rise to the importance of a primary aspect.'

In fact, when you deny the possibility of History, as opposed to histories, I respond with a definition. History is change, determined in time and space, to be apprehended by observation of events, and to be expounded by such a selection and deduction of events as in the historian's judgment – ὡς ὁ φρόνιμος ὁρίσεται – will give the most adequate account of the change itself.

That is good Aristotle anyhow. Try your hand at a Platonic definition.

PACIS INTERFUIT¹

I THINK I shall do best if I indicate what parts of this new volume are most likely to be of interest or value to readers who, like myself, do not bring sufficient knowledge of the subject with them to appreciate the more technical parts as they deserve. The two ethnological chapters, for example, on the European and Parthian background, are not really intelligible without the plates, which are to follow with Volume XII, and the same is true of the chapter on the art of the period. That on Roman Law I must take as read, and the three on Literature, Philosophy and Social Life are for the most part common form, though they do happen to contain one of the most remarkable ethnical judgments I have ever read. Epictetus, with his usual good sense and straightforwardness, somewhere says:

Behave in life as at a banquet: a dish comes to you – stretch out your hand and take a portion politely; it passes on – do not detain it; it has not yet reached you – do not anticipate it in desire.

On which the author of the chapter comments:

However immoral this teaching may be, we cannot help admiring Epictetus for his earnestness.

¹ *The Cambridge Ancient History*: Volume XI: The Imperial Peace A.D. 70–192.

Evidently,

Things are done you'd not believe
In Cambridge (Eng.) on Christmas Eve,

and a picture of the Fellows of Trinity fighting for the first cut off the turkey ought to be laid up for the instruction of posterity. It is to such incidental records, after all, that we owe the greater part of our knowledge of social customs under the Roman Empire. Might I also ask the editors, in the next volume, to exercise a stricter literary control over their translators, and not allow their pages to be starred with such horrors as 'very consequent' and 'the Roman Empire coins'. That Antoninus 'made punishable the exhibition of an Imperial statue as a provocation' I am very willing to believe. But I should like to know what it means first.

To the ordinary reader, I should say: begin with the Camden Professor's chapter on Rome and the Empire – forty pages of compact historical wisdom, animated by a deep, and discriminating, enthusiasm for his subject. I have read (or gone to sleep over) almost every volume of the Cambridge History A and M, and to match Professor Last's chapter I find myself going back to Maitland on the Elizabethan Settlement of Religion. What *was* the Roman Empire? The extension to the Ecumene of certain principles discovered by experience in the centuries during which Rome was moving towards the sovereignty of Italy; the need for authority, for *imperium*, somewhere; and the equal need to keep authority within those limits beyond which it will be resented. This is *libertas*. We have chosen another way; but we once

heard the Roman doctrine, very earnestly and solemnly declared, not far from Westminster. 'Sirs, I desire the liberty of the people as much as anybody. But, I must tell you that their liberty consists in having, of government, those laws by which their life and their goods may be most their own. It is not having a share in government, Sirs; that is nothing pertaining to them. But until you put the people in that liberty I say, they will never be happy.'

Now there can be no doubt whatever that for many generations after the establishment of the Principate, most of all in the hundred and twenty years after its refounding by Vespasian, 'the lives and goods' of ordinary people from the Tyne to the Euphrates were 'their own', as they had never been before. In this sense, therefore, the world was 'happy'. And, so long as the municipalities, cantons and cities, retained the large measure of self-government which Rome encouraged them to exercise; as the Army, the Law, the Civil Service, were progressively opened to provincials, the price of this 'immense majestic peace' was a light one. Here at last, it seemed, was a community in stable equilibrium, and the 'aeternitas Populi Romani' placed beyond the assaults of time. But the whole experiment rested on two suppositions. One, that a defensible frontier could be found and maintained; the other, that the local units would keep their vitality. Professor Last lays his finger on what in the long run proved a fatal weakness in the Imperial system, the constant tendency of the municipalities to fall below the Palatine standard of efficiency, thus inviting and almost compelling the continual intervention

of the Emperor. When Trajan believed himself to be dying, he whispered to his ablest marshal: 'Take care of the provinces if anything happens to me', and taking care of the provinces meant a progress, by successive, insensible stages, from hegemony through paternalism to the administrative absolutism of the new Monarchy.

But in the Second Century the danger was only impending: the economic disasters which precipitated it were still a long way off, and both the thought and the feeling of the *Ecumene* as a whole were heartily on the side of the Imperial order. The reconstruction after the Year of the Four Emperors is admirably described by Professor Charlesworth and Mr. Syme, and their narrative is well sustained by Mr. Longden through the reign of Trajan, unhappily one of the worst recorded periods of Imperial history. But here we see the other fatal problem emerging. There are three areas of special pressure from without – the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates – and three was one too many. To reduce them to two by making an interlocking system of defence from the North Sea to the Black Sea was the policy initiated by the Flavians, carried forward by Trajan when he threw out the Dacian bastion, and almost achieved by Marcus Aurelius in the annexation of Bohemia, which he projected and his son refused to complete. Regarded as a European state, the Empire was dangerously narrow-waisted: from the Rhine to Marseilles, from the Danube to Malea, is 600 miles: from Vienna to Aquileia is only 200. Here Central Europe comes too near the Mediterranean; here will be the line of fracture between East and West, the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches: and

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it is quite conceivable that, if Marcus had lived another ten years, the fracture would never have occurred. Parthia by herself could easily have been kept at arm's length; the waves of calamity rolling south and west from the great plains of Eastern Europe and Asia would have been stemmed and broken by the Roman *limes*: and the Mediterranean world would have developed as the unity which, thanks to the strength and wisdom of Rome, it now felt itself to be:

quod cuncti gens una sumus.

In this process of unification the culture, capacity and devouring activity of Hadrian counted perhaps for as much as any one factor we can assign. In Professor Weber of Berlin he finds a biographer whose acknowledged mastery of his subject is, at times, masked by a style which I should be sorry to call hectic, though I cannot think of anything else to call it. When he gets to Commodus one can almost hear the producer calling 'Shoot!' Yet there is a great deal in that chapter worth thinking over. The muscular, brainless, sensual boy, without purpose or self-control, did fit his world, a world which was ceasing to be classical, and turning towards things – faith, exuberance, originality, release – which the classic temper discountenances. The Christians always had a kindly memory of the reign when they had lived in peace under the Imperial protection. And, indeed, it is impossible not to feel that a slight turn of Nature's wrist, when she was making this Spaniard, would have sent him into the world as a messenger of the New Word, and the Redeeming Blood. Born in the

purple, Alec Durberville would have been rather like Commodus, and it was the Alec Durbervilles who gave the Early Church some of its most anxious hours.

In a particularly interesting chapter Dr. Streeter propounds Seven Reasons for being a Christian (they should be read with Gibbon's Five Causes): and first among them he places, as Harnack did, the sense of power and security against the forces of darkness, which the new faith gave its adherents. But, as history has shown again and again, the sense of spiritual power can be most dangerously misdirected; early in the second century a pamphlet, known to us as Second Peter, was in circulation, warning the faithful not to take St. Paul's doctrine of faith too literally. But what was the defence against the antinomianism which inevitably sprang up in a society charged with the conviction that it could do all things, through Christ the Strengthener? One feels at times, in turning over, for example, the wearying extravagances of Gnosticism, that it is touch and go; and that the chances are that Christ will fade into a cult-god, the Church be lost in some syncretistic mummery round the Holy Cake. What saved it from dissolution was the conception of Church organization, of which Ignatius of Antioch was the great assertor; the *ecclesiae* kept their shape and vitality, while the *civitates* were sinking into apathy. But of even greater consequence was the fact that the Sacred Book, which the Church, being of Jewish origin, could not be without, contained a biography of the Founder. To the question, which all the world was asking: what shall we do to be saved? sects, philosophies, mysteries, might

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give their different answers. But to the further question: 'and being saved, how are we to behave?' – the Church alone could reply: 'behave like your Saviour'. When all is considered, the reception of the Four Gospels into the canon of Scripture must be regarded, for its historical consequences, as the great and memorable event of the Imperial Peace.

PILGRIMS AT THE SHRINE¹

WHEN I say that this book opens with one of Major Allen's admirable air-photographs of Maiden Castle and ends with some mystical reflections by Mr. James Douglas on the Gresford Colliery explosion, my readers may wonder what the part in between is all about. In places I found myself wondering too. I think Mr. Knight has found the clue to something, but where exactly it will take us I do not quite see.

Actually, his book is an exposition of some thirty-six lines of the Sixth Aeneid. Aeneas has been summoned by his dead father, in a dream, to come down to the place of the departed, and there receive counsel as to his future doings. Arrived with his fleet at Cumae, therefore, he proceeds towards the seat of the Sibyl, a cave in a towering cliff, *arces quibus altus Apollo praesidet*, in front of which is a temple in a grove. The doors are panelled in relief with the Tale of Crete, of the Minotaur and his victims, and the Labyrinth where he devoured them; a primitive legend of human sacrifice and unnatural lust. One panel which was to have embodied the sculptor's grief for a son, early lost, is empty, because the artist could not compass his aim:

Bis patriae cecidere manus.

Why twice, when thrice is the traditional formula for unavailing effort? Because—at least I believe this to be

¹ *Cumaeae Gates*, by W. F. Jackson Knight.

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the explanation—the panel will not always remain unfinished. There is one coming who will complete it, if not in gold, then in golden verse:

Heu, miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas,
Tu Marcellus eris.

However that may be, while Aeneas and his party are studying this work of art, Achates, who has been sent ahead, returns with the Sibyl. ‘This’, she remarks, with some asperity, ‘is not the time for picture-gazing of that sort. You had better to proceed to your religious duties.’

Non hoc ista sibi tempus spectacula poscit:
Nunc grege de intacto septem mactare juvencos
Praestiterit: totidem lectos de more bidentes.

From the recollections of his friends we know that Virgil, having drafted the Aeneid in prose, used to work at any episode for which he felt himself in the mood, leaving the transitions and proportions to be adjusted later. This passage, I think, exemplifies his practice. It is not wanted for the story, and if it were taken out no one would notice the gap. Detached from its tremendous context, the whole scene is familiar, even homely. Aeneas and his friends might be studying the west front of Wells Cathedral, while one of the party has gone to ask if they may see the library. It is a situation which in the nature of things must arise whenever worshippers approach some famous shrine. Virgil must often have seen his own villagers, with their doves and sucking-pigs, gaping at the temple in Mantua, while one of their number had stepped inside to arrange for the

sacrifice on which they were intent. In the Supplementary Tale, Chaucer's pilgrims are puzzling out the stained-glass figures –

He beareth a ball-staff in his hand,
 With a prick set afore,
 To push adown his enemy
 And through the shoulder gore

is the Miller's interpretation of St. Michael or St. George – when the Host interrupts them with the reproof, very much in the manner of the Sibyl,

Go up and do your offerings,
 Ye seemeth half amazed.

Indeed, the little band of North Country visitors to Jerusalem: 'Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here,' are not behaving very differently from Aeneas and his staff at Cumae, or the Cook and the Reeve at Canterbury.

But among all the renderings of this set theme, there is one of particular charm, which Virgil must have known, and which was, I believe, in his mind when he wrote this passage. Dawn is on Parnassus, and the young servant of Apollo is heard singing the morning hymn, before he appears, to make ready for the worshippers by sweeping the floor and driving away the birds who nest in the jutting frieze. To him enter a party of sightseers, reading the sculptures on the temple front as they advance. 'Look,' says one, 'that is Heracles destroying the Hydra.' 'There is the rider on the winged horse, going to slay the Chimera.' 'There is the

war of the Gods and Giants.' 'And there is my own Athena!' They are ladies from the Court of Athens, and Ion receives them with all the courtesy, and all the firmness, of a private schoolboy told off to see that the mothers do not walk across the pitch. 'May we come inside?' 'You may not,' he says: 'without a sacrifice of sheep, you may not enter the shrine.' 'We quite understand,' they answer, 'and we should never think of disobeying the divine commands. But all this is so beautiful!' 'Of course,' he explains graciously, 'anything you are allowed to look at, you may.' Euripides, whose genius was strongest in the vein of romantic comedy, never contrived a scene more radiant with youth and humour and morning air, or set it before us in verse of more magical beauty.

Out of the savage imagery of the Cumean Gate – the panel that might have redeemed it being missing – Mr. Knight selects one piece, the Labyrinth, as his clue. In so doing, I think he has missed much of its meaning, but, on the other hand, he has struck out a path into an unfamiliar but highly interesting country. In the New Hebrides, among the Malakulans, it would appear, the Journey of the Soul is related very much as it is in the Sixth Aeneid, and the connecting link between these widely separated myths is found in the ancient Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh, who went into the kingdom of the dead to consult the Man who Survived the Flood, U-nashiptim, better known to us as Noah. 'The three myths', Mr. Knight says, 'have these things in common: (1) The travellers get specially provided sticks. (2) They must have them for their journeys.

(3) Their use is to cross the waters on the way to the land of the dead. (4) They are in one way or other closely connected with boats.' And when he adds that 'the affinity between the three versions is absolutely clear', I do not think he is going farther than the evidence warrants. In Virgil, the stick is, of course, the Golden Bough: and here Mr. Knight effects a combination which, to my mind, is very nearly conclusive. In the Sumerian story, Gilgamesh has to cut a number of poles, to punt with, because some essential part of his boat – presumably the paddle – has been lost. In the Aeneid, the first person Aeneas meets in the Underworld is his pilot, who had shortly before fallen overboard, carrying an essential part of the ship, the rudder to wit, with him. It is not easy to avoid the inference that Virgil is using some primeval myth, which, probably in a broken and distorted form, had come down to him, as folklore or fairy tale; bringing the fragments together in a new shape which could serve as the vehicle for his own sensitive, doubtful, dreamlike philosophy, of life and death, or, what interested him even more, of the moral and political order of the world.

In one of the New Hebridean myths there is in front of the cave, which is guarded by a female spirit, as the Cumaean cave is by a Sibyl, a maze which the ghost has to thrid, and Mr. Knight suggests that the pictured maze on the doorway is a relic of this element in the story. His observations on mazes – the tactical maze (this is where Maiden castle and its elaborate entrances come in) – the ritual maze, creating a field of magic force through which friends can pass and enemies or evil spirits cannot

– the pictured maze like that found inscribed on a slab in the Long Barrow of Bryn Celli Ddu, in Anglesea – and, finally, the Mazy Dance, like the Roman military ride called Troia, are suggestive and have much industriously acquired information behind them, some of which, however, seems to me of exceedingly dubious quality. Mr. Knight is modestly given to thinking that a thing has been proved to be this or that when one of his authorities has said it is so. There is a greater difference between the two propositions than German scholars always recognize. I may have failed to follow his argument in places, but it did strike me once or twice that by his methods it would not be difficult to show that Achilles of Troy in Asia Minor and A. Quiller Couch of Troy Town in Cornwall were identical figures in a primitive initiation ceremony. And the legend of the Holy Grail is not to be taken up as a sideline, and disposed of in a footnote.

Thus, though there are things in it that I was very glad to learn, this part of Mr. Knight's work left me unconvinced. In particular, as I have already suggested, he seems to me to have concentrated his attention unduly on the maze, at the expense of the other imagery on the gate. Taken as a whole, and compared with the sculptures on the temple front at Delphi, it is of an earlier, a more barbaric, time. It is monstrous. When this is considered, the words of the Sibyl –

Non hoc ista sibi tempus spectacula poscit,

begin to disclose their significance. Virgil does not write conversation pieces for the fun of writing them, and he

has just dropped a hint which he means us to follow up. The beginning of the story on the Cumaean Gates is a murder, atoned for by the annual sacrifice of seven young Athenians in the Cretan Labyrinth; and Virgil puts the word *septem* in the most emphatic place in the verse. The sacrifice which Aeneas is to offer is also of sevens – seven oxen and seven sheep. ‘The sights you are looking at’, the Sibyl means, ‘do not belong to our age. Better now a harmless sacrifice of sheep and oxen.’

The twofold shape of the Minotaur recalls, too; – I have no doubt it is meant to recall – at once the Hydras and Chimeras whom the Children of Heaven were commissioned to destroy, and the monstrous gods of every form, and barking Anubis, from whose threatened ascendancy, as Virgil believed, Augustus had rescued civilization. From the cliffs at Cumae, Apollo looks down on the fleet of Aeneas, as from the headland of Actium he had looked down on the fleet of Italy, arrayed in defence of Hesperia, the Western world of reason and good government.

THE TRUE STORY OF THE ARGONAUTS

Φέρομεν νώτων ὑπερ γαίας ἐρήμων ἐννάλιον δόρυ, μήδεσιν
ἀνσπᾶσαντες ἄμοϊς. *Fourth Pythian*

NUM was born before his time. Lum and Tum, who really liked him, had some difficulty in persuading the priests and business men that he was not mad, only different. For one thing, his people spoke a monosyllabic agglutinative language, but Num had a habit, especially when he was rather drunk, of running his words together, which puzzled most of his neighbours and even annoyed them. But Lum and Tum thought it sounded very musical and nice, and they liked to fill him up with the soft and sunny Pannonian wine, and start him talking.

You must know that if you live in the valley of the Sava when the floods are out, you simply have to be a lake-dweller whether you like it or don't. This Num could not abide. 'Either our habitat', he would say, 'is lacustrine, or it is not. But it is not. Why then surround ourselves with a cumbrous and misleading apparatus of boats? Deliberately to confuse the stratification of a prehistoric site, is a sin against the spirit of science, of which I for my part will never be guilty. I would rather be . . .'

'Drowned,' said Lum, who spent much of his time rescuing Num, when he was practising inflexions with the water rising round his hut.

THE TRUE STORY OF THE ARGONAUTS

'Lum', said Num with some asperity, 'how often must I tell you that the argumentum ad hominem is wholly insufficient to sustain, or even create, a conviction? Certainly, for specific and appropriate purposes, let there be boats, or', he added thoughtfully, 'a boat: a communally constructed and directed boat. I wonder.' With this he rose and retired for the night.

It so happened that the next season was sickly, and after a prodigious searching of entrails the priests announced that all the babies born that year must be sacrificed. The edict required to be ratified in a general assembly of the people, but as the women had no vote and men do not care for babies, no opposition was expected. It was noticed, however, that Num, who usually took no part in public life, spent much time in earnest conversation with the younger members of the tribe. The results were apparent on polling day, when Num stood forward with what he called an amendment: namely

to leave out *this year*
and say *twice ten years past*;
and to leave out *killed full stop*
and say *sent out full stop*.

It was the first amendment in history and many ribs were broken in the division lobbies. When quiet was restored, Num produced his substantive resolution. Translated by Lum and Tum, it ran:—Build one big boat. All the boys. Girls too. Lots of fun. See the world. Num on top. Then Lum and Tum. Shout yes.

And shout they did.

Num took to going about in a sheep's skin dyed yellow

as a badge of authority. The hard work, or as he called it, the merely administrative and executive detail, he left to Lum and Tum. Mainly for this reason it really was a very fine boat, and on April 21st they started out, going upstream, because, as Lum and Tum argued, it would be much easier to get back if they changed their minds. For a while all went well, but then, one day, there was a slow, ripping grind, a bump, another grind, another bump, and the boat stopped. No one minded much: it was lovely weather, the woods were full of wild creatures, and, what with hunting all day and making love all night, they agreed they had never been so happy in their lives. They always remembered it as the Good Spring, and advised their children and grandchildren to try it for themselves. But when I say no one, I do not mean Num. He was worried: and one day he invited Lum and Tum to a serious talk. There was, I should have told you, an unattached girl on board who spent most of her time singing quietly to herself and gathering herbs in the woods. She was sitting on the quarterdeck, crooning over her wild flowers, while Num was talking. 'Hydrographical conditions', he was saying, 'would appear to have set a term, or limit, to our progress.' The girl looked up. 'Why not pull the old boat?' she asked. 'My child,' said Num gently, 'you have not grasped the position: the depth of the water renders the suggestion impracticable.' 'Oh, I know that,' she said, 'but I mean cut down a lot of trees and roll her on the ground.' Num was puzzled but Lum and Tum nodded approval: the company were called in from hunting and the necessary orders given.

THE TRUE STORY OF THE ARGONAUTS

So for days they felled and trundled logs, and for days they tugged and hauled and sang, and on the twelfth day they crossed the watershed with the girl standing in the prow, her hair streaming in the gales of the Karst, and chanting:

Through the wild mountain symphony
Timavus thunders like a sea.

‘What do you call it, Num,’ Tum asked, ‘when words make you see and feel things at the same time in your chest?’

‘Ah, Tum,’ he replied, a little sadly, ‘we have no name for it yet. But our descendants, for whom I foresee a destiny not less illustrious in arts than in arms, will call it the Virgilian hexameter.’

On the shore they met a Proto-Helladic trader from Corinth. They exchanged drinks and topographical information, and he went home and told his friends that in the Illyrian bight he had met a hero with a Golden Fleece accompanied by two important Twins and an Enchanting Girl from the East. They agreed it must have been a wonderful journey, and some of them began to fancy that they had been there themselves. Only, when they came to work it out on the map, they got their rivers mixed, and that is why no one till now has ever known the True Story of the Argonauts.

In the Roman History, Num is called Numa Pompilius, which is, being interpreted, Num Who Led Us Here.

SOPHIST AND SWASHBUCKLER

WHEN Kingsley, in a review of Froude's *History*, gave a passing flick at Newman, neither he nor any of his readers could have guessed the results that were to follow. Newman in 1860 was no great figure: out of the world, and almost out of memory. It was supposed that he was uncomfortable in the Church of Rome: he was not, or at any rate the Church was the more uncomfortable of the two. He was regarded, so far as anyone regarded him at all, with some pity, some suspicion and some contempt. He had been badly treated by Rome, but why had he ever left Oxford? He wrote fine English, but the meaning was sometimes doubtful and sometimes repellent. What had an Englishman, an Oxford man, with taste and judgment refined by the classics and philosophy of the Schools, to do with the glories of Mary, and the healing oil that flowed from the bones of St. Walburga?

Dislike and fear of Popery is a Victorian datum. The educated eighteenth century took its Catholics very coolly. Plans could be discussed for a union of the Anglican and Gallican churches. French privateers were ordered to spare the Manx fishermen out of respect for the apostolic virtues of Bishop Wilson: emigrant French priests were welcomed, cared for, found employment. If Pitt had carried Catholic Emancipation with the Union, there would have been no line left on which the opposing creeds could array themselves. The division, which he

was compelled to make between Protestant and Catholic citizens, crystallized the distinction between Protestant and Catholic believers. If we ask, what harm could Rome do to England? the answer was that it might make Ireland rebel.

Emancipation was granted, as we all know, too late. In that interval of lost opportunity, English religion, the religion of the ascendant class, had taken one of its periodic turns. It had been sacramental in the seventeenth century, ethical in the eighteenth; it was becoming evangelical: and the essence of the evangelical faith was the effort to ensure salvation by the deliberate performance of actions which had an individual moral worth, and the calculated avoidance of all others. It left no neutral ground: and the Canon of moral worth was simple. Not the practice of society, nor the impulses of the wayward heart: not even, as the Benthamites vainly talked, the greatest good of the greatest number. Scripture, and the deductions therefrom of the most scripturally-minded persons.

In one of her stories, Harriet Newman, who had a distinct touch of her brother's ironic humour, gives the conversation of three or four young people on the question of manners. Should a young man, for example, open a door for a young woman? Mary Anne demands an instance of Abraham being polite to a girl. Ellen counters with the presents he sent to Rebecca. 'That', says Mary Anne, 'is no precedent for personal attentions.' 'Then what', says the persevering Ellen, 'do you say to Jacob's rolling the stone away for Rachel at the well?' Constance, as usual, had her Polyglot

Bible with her: they turn up the passage and the verdict is for Ellen.

Now nothing can be plainer than that many of the observances, rites and tenets of the Church of Rome are quite as unscriptural as the practice of setting chairs for ladies. Therefore they were sinful. Therefore those who enjoined them were anti-Christ, frustrators of the scheme of salvation: those who followed them, unless they could be excused by helpless ignorance, were lost. Certainly, this conclusion is no part of the authentic Anglican tradition. The Caroline divines would have rejected it with disgust, and indeed one biting phrase of Hooker's, 'the mystery of a gospel-like behaviour', seems by anticipation to dismiss the whole apparatus of evangelical morality. But it was, over a large part of English society, the accepted doctrine a hundred years ago. Rome was a danger to the State. Not less, Rome was a danger to each individual soul.

Given the premisses and the equipment of the average middle-class mind of the time, is there any answer? I confess I can see none. We cannot say the issue was unimportant: it was all-important – Ireland a French province barring the western outlet of our trade: hell, increasingly tenanted with lost English souls. It really was rather serious. And on those who did not take either the French or the Devil quite so much to heart, on the great mass of church- or chapel-going voters, serious, regular men, the authority, uniformity, beauty and history, which make up three-fourths of the appeal of Rome, operated with exactly a reverse effect. They were individuals and men of the present: they would tolerate

little interference by the State and its officials: none by a foreign church and its ministers. Even in worship, they must feel their own weight, whether they were criticizing the sermon or joining in the hymns. They would not have the management of their affairs, their families or their souls, taken out of their hands. They disliked ritual as much as they disliked the sight of Gold Stick walking backwards before the Queen, and for very nearly the same reason. There was no historic or aesthetic fibre in their composition to respond, and it made them feel outsiders.

Thus the antipathy to Rome was in part political, in part religious and, in part, what we can only call temperamental. The England which the Tractarians came to startle was solidly and actively Protestant: the Wesleyans had not quite withdrawn themselves from the Church, and the Evangelical movement had brought the Church nearer to the old established sects, the Independents and the Baptists. Froude looking back on it all blamed the Oxford leaders for not leaving well alone. He thought of the twenties and early thirties as a golden age of good feeling and harmonious activity which they had ruined. But it is often forgotten that the Oxford Movement, in its inception, was a defensive measure against a positive danger. The Whigs had shown that in Ireland they were as ready to rearrange the dioceses as if they had been so many Government departments, even to appropriate Church funds for other than Church purposes. What if they, of their own volition or by the urging of the Radical and Irish left wings, tried their hand on the Church at home? There was a promising field for reform, and

popular agitation: tithes, sinecures, pluralities. Round what could the ministers of an impoverished and discredited communion rally, if they were to continue their work, and not become, like the non-jurors, levites and chaplains, patronized where they had once ruled and dependent for their living on the tone of their sermons? There was, as we know, no real danger, and the alarm soon quieted down. But there was a danger of another, more insidious kind. Suppose the Whigs used their patronage to liberalize the Church?

One of Newman's rarest gifts was his capacity for stating the other side of the case: his Eighteen Propositions of Liberalism, as it was professed in Oxford in his young days, could have been signed by Grote, Mill, Macaulay or Palmerston, with hardly more delay than was necessary to express their surprise at such sound doctrine coming from such an unsound quarter. What is more surprising, Huxley and the agnostics of the late nineteenth century would have proclaimed, and constantly did proclaim, their adherence with gusto. What could be more to the Late Victorian taste or more in the Late Victorian manner than Propositions 4 and 5?

(4) It is dishonest in a man to make an act of faith in what he has not had brought home to him by actual proof.

(5) It is immoral in a man to believe more than he can spontaneously receive as being congenial to his mental and moral nature.

Indeed why should he? Or indeed, how can he?

We are approaching a chasm which the modern mind

cannot easily cross. Somewhere about 1860 a rift opens in the English intelligence. To us it seems the most obvious thing in the world that, in logical jargon, every judgment must be in the form: I being what I am, and the evidence being what it is, am disposed more or less strongly to think so and so. The force may be so great that I am unable to think otherwise. To-day: but it may not be so to-morrow. Psychologists say that one of the characteristics of the child mind is the capacity for holding contradictory ideas simultaneously. Another, I think, and one that lasts longer, is the craving for certainty. The child loves speculation, but when his meditations have issued in a question he wants a definite answer. We do not often think of the early Victorian age as primitive. But in many ways it was. It could hold with undisturbed conviction a religious and an economic faith which were incompatible, and it wanted to be sure. Certitude came naturally to an age which still had a Sacred Book. But a Sacred Book is a precarious basis of assurance: it may always turn out to be wrong. Much Early Victorian thought was given to widening the basis, and, principally, on two lines. One which runs from Carlyle and Arnold through Kingsley and Froude would make the Book co-extensive with history. The other would make it co-extensive with natural science. In Kingsley they meet and blend.

In dealing with a past age we constantly need a central man to refer to, and naturally he will not be one of its greatest men in the eyes of later generations. Kingsley is very nearly the central man of that period of swift change which sets in soon after 1845 and was consummated

about twenty years later. In the main it was a period of liberation and 'conservatism. Kingsley was with equal sincerity and heartiness on the side of knowledge and the State, religion and the family: and he realized, while believing in them all equally, that religion must allow for science, and the family for sex. Inevitably therefore he passed for a revolutionary, a heretic, and a propagator of impurity. When Newman wrote, in his own defence, 'I have long thought that the Protestant system leads to a lax observance of the rule of purity' the stroke went home. *Yeast* had been attacked on that very ground, and Kingsley had been reduced to calling his critic—the first Lord Coleridge—a liar. But if we put ourselves at the point of view of 1848 when the book appeared, I am not so sure that Coleridge was wrong. Kingsley was, perhaps without quite knowing it, assailing the Evangelical asceticism at its most delicate point, and not putting anything in its place. We may agree that Tom Brown is on the whole a better sort of man than Pitt Crawley. But Pitt Crawley's religion made it much easier for him to keep away from the girls.

But this was only half of him. The other half exemplifies one of the most elusive and puzzling cross currents of the mid-Victorian times. Nordicism: *Furor Teutonicus*: aristocracy: muscular Christianity. One can interpret it in many ways. Mr. Sitwell might say that it was the last struggle of the fair-haired stock to maintain its ascendancy in an urbanized world which is naturally inimical to the type. The time was favourable. The triumphant *bourgeoisie* of 1830 was looking rather small in 1850: the gentry, who, in 1846, seemed to be down and out for

ever, were in fact just entering on their golden age. There was a great deal of day-dreaming in it all. But the fundamental facts fitted with the dream: on the whole, with the inevitable reservations, the gentry knew that they ought to treat their underlings well, the *bourgeoisie* did not: it was becoming every year clearer that what England needed was active authority somewhere: and where could a better model be found than in the active authoritative country gentleman? Tory men and Benthamite measures was a promising combination. And in fact it worked. It is working still.

The classics of this tendency are Froude's *History* and *Westward Ho!*

Froude thinks Kingsley a divine,
And Kingsley goes to Froude for history;

and the passage in which Kingsley attacked Newman might indeed have been written by either of them. They had their eyes on the Jesuit invasion of Elizabeth's time which more than anything else stabilized the English attitude towards Rome. It has often been pointed out that the ordinary theatre-going public of Shakespeare's time evidently expected Catholic observances to be treated with respect. But Jesuits and their Pope neither the Elizabethan nor any other generation of Englishmen would endure. In 1850 the Oxford Movement had run its course and been reabsorbed with the main stream of religious tendency. Papal aggression drove the public into hysteria and raised a dark cloud of suspicion both against those who had left the Church and those who remained. It rested most heavily on Newman.

But when we turn to the passage itself and the sentence of Newman on which it was founded, it is difficult not to feel that in their clumsy way Kingsley and the public were right. It was a very clumsy way, certainly. But if the public, or the modern reader, said 'Never mind all that: what we want to know is, when Dr. Newman or one of his pupils tells us a thing, can we believe it as we should believe it if the old-fashioned parson said it?' I am afraid the upshot of the *Apologia* and its appendices is No. And what is one to make of a man, especially of a preacher, whose every sentence must be put under a logical microscope if its full sense is to be revealed? In the end one is as sorry for Kingsley as one is for the Jesuits to whom Pascal replied. In controversy, it is important to begin by understanding the size of your opponent: and Kingsley, it is plain, had no conception, when he drew his broadsword, of the dexterity of his opponent's rapier play. It was the bowling of the village champion with a Blue at the wicket, and what did not go wide went to the boundary. Yet I think the judgment must be, if we take the controversy seriously and not as a game, that Newman is after all only operating with incomparable markmanship from a position of invincible credulity. But it is in a flank position: he does not face his opponent. When the day ends, Newman is still there with colours flying, but the enemy is miles ahead.

Because it produced the *Apologia*, the onslaught of Kingsley keeps its place in the history of thought. Entirely forgotten is an earlier and far more skilful assault. Newman's fatal defect was want of historic learning: he had enough for Kingsley: but in the hands of Milman he

was helpless. The *Essay on Development*, is, as its title declares, nothing if not historical: and of historical evidence, as of the methods of historical inquiry, it may be safely affirmed Newman knew nothing. Firmly handled, the *Essay* simply crumbles to pieces, and what is left – let us call it by its right name – is nothing but a compost of sophistry and superstition. Milman came too soon to be affected by the Nordic fancies of Christian Socialism: he was an Anglican of the centre, of the generation which had grown up in the glow of Evangelical enthusiasm, but had abandoned neither the learning nor the authority of the *Clerus Anglicanus*. Entirely forgotten: yet as a statement of the Anglican philosophy, insular but not parochial, Protestant but with no rejection of the common tradition of all Western churches, soundly historic, soberly aesthetic, observing always the practical balance of the moral and mystical elements in its faith, I know nothing more wisely reasoned, or – speaking within the mind of the age – more convincing, than Milman's review of the *Essay on Development*.

PROSE, OLD AND NEW ¹

Two things struck me particularly in reading Mr. Dobrée's *Modern Prose Style*. One is the great variety of manners which a contemporary critic has to consider: by a critic I mean anyone who reads with appreciation of form. The other is the inadequacy of our critical vocabulary to record small differences. Mr. Dobrée, for instance, is contrasting the styles of Mr. Manning and Mr. Moore: the comparison is carefully thought out and well sustained. Then in a despairing footnote Mr. Dobrée adds, 'I know all this is subjective, but what is one to do?' I fancy a Greek would have known what to do. Starting with a few technical terms borrowed from music and poetry, Greek criticism built up a large scholastic vocabulary of frozen metaphors with which to register such distinctions as baffle Mr. Dobrée. It is often difficult to see exactly what a particular term means; but in the hands of Dionysius and Longinus they are manifestly being used with a scientific precision which our own critical language very rarely approaches. That the last word is with the subjective, with the disciplined sensibility of the reader or hearer, the ancients knew as well as we, and much better than the Renaissance or the Augustans. But it was the last word: and it was not permitted to interrupt the preliminary process of analysis and report.

I do not know if Mr. Dobrée has grounded his studies

¹ *Modern Prose Style*, by Bonamy Dobrée.

on the ancient critics, or whether it is only identity of approach that has produced identity of observation. From first to last he is concerned with voice, with the form and quality of the sentence or paragraph as an utterance, delivered by the speaker and received by the hearer. To the ancients this was natural, because they still thought of prose and poetry as essentially things spoken, or read aloud. To us, who have lived for generations under the written word, it is not easy to understand, still less to incorporate in our own ideas, the Greek insistence on Delivery and to believe that the Forum really did break into roars of applause because a speaker closed a paragraph with

filiī comprobavit.

It was not until I had heard Russian spoken, that I realized, in the strong cadences and steep modulations, with the long inflexions forming a musical accompaniment to the meaning, what ancient delivery must have been like.

To transpose ancient critical ideas into our own idiom we have therefore to posit a kind of imaginary voice. Mr. Dobrée quotes a sentence from *The Times*:

As soon as it was announced, on the morrow of Parliament's rising,

and asks, 'Who would dream of *saying* "on the morrow of Parliament's rising"?' Shortly afterwards, of a journalist who produced 'No sound comes from out those walls', he asks, 'Does the man habitually say "from out"?' If he is a local preacher, he probably does, in his emotive hour. One can hear him saying it. But there is a

difference between the two which, I think, a Greek would have noticed, and could have named. *Parliament's rising* is a solecism: it is not a turn of speech employed by anyone who is in the habit of hearing good English spoken; *from out those walls* is a frigidity of the class: misuse of poetic phrasing to give elevation. The Greek would not, however, have condemned it on Mr. Dobrée's grounds. He would have said rather, 'Of course, you must not use *from out* when you are talking about a police station: you might use it, though, if you were speaking of the prisons of the Inquisition, and it was in keeping with the general tone of the passage. But your question: do we *say* this? reminds me rather of the lawyer's trick when the propriety of a novel is in question: Tell me, is this the sort of book you would put in a Young Girl's hands? The answer, of course, is that there are other readers in the world besides Young Girls; and Nature, who has furnished lovers with diminutives and fish-wives with expletives, has given all of us many voices, and rhythms and diction suitable to many occasions. When you ask me what is the difference, for example, between

Embryon truths, and verities yet in their chaos:
and

truth in the old fashioned, absolute sense of the term:

I think I can tell you. Large and rare words give fullness to style: simple and ordinary words give ease: the slow and resonant

embr and *ontr*

contrasted with the quick, light

abs and *utes*,

correspond in each case with the diction. You say, what indeed I can see for myself, that the second passage is nearer to the language of ordinary life. But your assertion that authors are now impelled "to try to write as they speak in ordinary life on ordinary physical matters" makes me somewhat anxious for the future of your literature. When indeed you suggest that there is in this a certain fidelity and honesty, as if it were a virtue to pretend that no one had ever written before, I discern the foundations of your national greatness. Solon, Solon, you English are always Sunday-school children, and your own zeal to extirpate the "literary" from literature suggests the Sunday-school monitor on the track of furtive pear-drops.'

To the Greek we might reply that the 'literary' made a pretty bad mess of his literature, and that while his doctrine of the Many Voices is in theory sound, in practice he went wrong, and led a multitude after him, by using his Public Voice where it was not wanted, making History, for example, and even Geography, dance to the tune of Declamation. For in the end the Voices are reducible to two, that in which we 'dispute and assert', and the other in which we 'whisper conclusions to one another': the polemical, expository, forensic, homiletic; and the dialectic. Here again the Greek was ready with his standard models: Thucydides of the High Harmony, Lysias of the Low, Plato and Demosthenes rising and falling from a Middle Harmony between the two. And here, it seems to me, rather than in the contrast between the spoken and written word, is the clue to the history of

English prose since the Restoration. Farther back we need hardly go. The men of Charles II's time were the first English generation to think of themselves as Modern: they needed a prose to match, and they devised an instrument which really did satisfy Mr. Dobrée's ideal: 'ordinary speech on ordinary physical matters'. We might call it Royal Society prose, because the Royal Society's injunction to contributors was plainly meant to be read – don't write like Sir Thomas Browne. Out of it came the Low or Middle Harmony of Dryden, Addison, Swift and Berkeley.

Prose of this kind is unquestionably difficult to write. It will therefore be, by most authors, written badly. The dangers ahead are many: false simplicity, formless ease, aridity, meanness, vulgarity. To keep it going needs an athletic tension of the individual mind, and strong critical discipline from society. Our Attic phase ended in Grub Street, and there were no Salons, and no good Social Comedy, to keep the tradition moving forward. Swift, who saw the mischief coming, called for an Academy. Whether in that mode or some other, the need was for form: the desire, no doubt also, was for something more resonantly and visibly fine than the Attic manner provided. It is not easy to write like Dryden because it is not easy to see how, otherwise than other men, Dryden writes. But anyone can learn to say,

He was an envoy without dexterity and a plenipotentiary without address.

It is true, I believe, that Greek, as used by Greeks, not by the conglomerate population of the Eastern

Mediterranean, never quite loses its colloquial tone. Latin is for public performance: at its naughtiest, even, it has a certain liturgical dignity, and the freedmen in Petronius, though they get their genders wrong, can turn a sentence as well as Petronius himself. Structurally our own language, as spoken, is nearer to Greek;¹ it sits loose to syntax, and declines to recognize the Laws of Grammar as anything more than statistical averages. But our vocabulary for public purposes is mainly Latin, and Latin words, simply by their greater length, impose a definite rhythm on our speech, and a delivery akin to that of the parent tongue. To take the first example that occurs,

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the
floods drown it,

seems to me to require the Greek, or private, voice:

That her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity
is pardoned,

the public, or Roman, voice.

Thus the contrast between the written and the spoken word does not seem to me to be quite so fundamental as Mr. Dobrée supposes. I do not, for instance, feel the great passages of Johnson –

Far from me and from my friends be such frigid
philosophy,

or

Of Gilbert Walmsley thus presented to my mind –

¹ Anglo-Irish is still closer. Someone ought to try the experiment of translating *Lysias* into Anglo-Irish.

DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN

as being translations from a spoken to a written idiom. It was as natural for Burke in one mood to *say*

the contortions of the Sibyl without her inspiration:

as, in another, to *write*,

As I came through Uxbridge, I found that, at the last market day, barley was at forty shillings a quarter: oats there were literally none: and the innkeeper was obliged to send for them to London. I forgot to ask about pease.

Really there is no reason to think, as Mr. Dobrée suggests, that Johnson 'recoiled with horror' from the vulgarity of 'it has not wit enough to keep it sweet'. Most of his conversation, and much of the *Lives of the Poets*, is in that manner: and he evidently enjoyed the humour of interlacing the two styles. 'The woman has a bottom of good sense. I say the woman is fundamentally sensible.' 'Henceforth let no man suffer his felicity to depend upon the death of his aunt.' The nineteenth century in the person of Leslie Stephen pronounced that sentence to be pompous and absurd, and for the nineteenth century there was this excuse. It was tone-deafened by the output of debased Augustan English in the early days of the steam-press: the English of auctioneers and uneducated journalists, of advertisers and canvassers: the most degraded idiom known to our literary history, the English of the Serious Door, the Extensive Aggregation of Similar Lucubrations, and the Inescapable and Major Issue of Redundancy: the English in which guidebooks are unable

to enjoy the accommodations of the Norfolk Hotel without being reminded of an occurrence indicative of the importance of beauty and accomplishments never being separated from virtue;

and in which

the object of this arrangement is to limit to two floors the height to which it is necessary to ascend in order to reach the front door.

It is still with us: of these pearls, one was secreted by a Committee on Herrings in 1934, and another by the London County Council in 1933.

The voice of Johnson was the voice of Rome calling the Græculi to order: it bore much the same relation to the delivery of his successors as the deportment of Pitt to the deportment of Mr. Turveydrop. But the Attic tradition was running clear and fresh all the while: in Gray's letters, for instance, in Goldsmith, in Cowper, in Miss Austen, in Hazlitt. An Attic revival was due, and in time it came, with Thackeray and Frederick Rogers, Lord Blachford, who taught Fleet Street to write the English he had learnt from Newman. But, in the meantime, so much had happened that the pendulum, which had swung from Greece to Rome, was, instead of swinging from Rome back to Greece, set spinning. Sensibility had come in, and Romance: the water-colourists had called into existence a new world of observation for prose to register. It was an age of confusion: and how many elements were warring in that chaos we might reckon by considering how many strands went to the making of Bulwer's prose.

DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN

I am speaking now of that pause which followed on the death of Byron and closed with the appearance of the great Victorians, and it is about here, I think, that we first become aware of the ascendancy of the printed word. We needed a Dryden or a Johnson to set a form upon this indigest. Unluckily, the most effective prose writers of the thirties, Bulwer himself, Dickens, Macaulay and Carlyle, were anything but good models. Yet three of them were very great prose writers, and reading through Mr. Dobrée's selections from contemporaries, I was often struck by resemblances, analogies if not echoes, which emphasized the remarkable modernity of Dickens's prose. We must think away the Fantastic belonging to his decade, and the showman's patter belonging to himself; and then – to what age does a sentence like this belong?

If the day were bright, you observed upon the house-tops, stretching far away, a long dark path: the shadow of the Monument: and, turning round, the tall original was close beside you, with every hair erect upon his golden head.

In the originality of the observation, and the ease, directness, and above all the unassuming confidence with which it is imparted, we have, it seems to me, the elements which Mr. Dobrée desiderates and finds in the best prose writing of to-day.

To think of Dickens is to think of Ruskin. They are the two great masters of the Victorian art of verbal description: so great that, at its best, their descriptive prose attains an illusionist quality: to recall a passage is

almost the equivalent of recalling a scene actually observed. And here Mr. Dobrée's selections suggest an unexpected ratio. Spring in London from *The Man who Lost Himself* is done in the Dickens manner of successive, discrete registration: the Water Tapestry from the *Visit of the Gypsies* continues Ruskin's method of continuous revelation. One could be matched against the Fog exordium of *Bleak House*: the other against the Journey from Mestre in the *Stones of Venice*. Mr. Hughes, in *High Wind in Jamaica*, goes back to Dickens: Mr. Roger Fry, in *Sampler from Castile*, to Ruskin. Is it possible that our Modern Prose is not quite so modern as it thinks? Let us look.

After quoting the passage:¹

Now great rolling uplands of enormous sweep, now boundless grassy plains: there is all the grandeur of monotony and yet continual change. Sometimes the distances are broken by the blue buttes or natural bluffs. Over all there is a sparkling atmosphere and never-failing breeze: the air is bracing even when most hot, the sky is cloudless and no rain falls. To those who love the sea, there is here a double charm. Not only is the roll of the prairie as grand as that of the Atlantic, but the crispness of the wind, the absence of trees, the multitude of tiny blooms upon the sod, all conspire to give a feeling of nearness to the ocean, the effect of which is that we are always expecting to hail it from the top of the next hillock.

The colour of the landscape is, in summer, green

¹ From *Greater Britain*, by Sir Charles Dilke.

DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN

and flowers; in fall time, yellow and flowers, but
flowers ever,

the critic proceeds to analyse it thus:

The traveller does not call in the aid of poetical comparisons (the only comparison indulged in is the obvious one of the Atlantic) and the effect of the description on the mind is due to the extreme care with which the writer has put together in a short space the special and peculiar characteristics of the scenery, not forgetting to tell us everything that we of ourselves would naturally fail to imagine. The greatest difficulties that he has to contend against are the ignorance and previous misconceptions of his readers. He must give information without appearing didactic, and correct what he foresees as probable false conceptions, without ostentatiously pretending to know better. His language must be as concise as possible or important sentences will be skipped, and yet at the same time it must flow easily enough to be pleasantly readable.

Surely here the original passage would satisfy in principle Mr. Dobrée's conception of the modern way of writing: its quietness and fidelity, expressing the movement of the mind in the rhythm of ordinary speech. But it was written in 1866, and Hamerton's criticism, written a few years later, shows an attitude to prose-writing which is almost exactly the attitude of Mr. Dobrée himself. This kind of prose was widely diffused in the mid-Victorian time: out of the riot and uproar of the thirties there emerged a cool and lucid idiom; very much as the

confusion of early Victorian manners subsided into the 'informal serviceableness' which was the expected bearing of the late-Victorian gentleman.

This prose was in the main, I think, the creation of Oxford, and ultimately perhaps it could be traced to the Common room of Oriel.

And it is here that the spirit of our age imposes itself on us. All the previous ages whose writers have been quoted or referred to here, had something they could take for granted, and it never occurred to the older writers that they could not take themselves for granted. We can be sure of nothing: our civilization is threatened, even the simplest things we live by: we are on the verge of amazing changes. In our present confusion our only hope is to be scrupulously honest with ourselves, so honest as to doubt our own minds and the conclusions they arrive at. Most of us have ceased to believe, except provisionally, in truths, and we feel that what is important is not so much truth as the way our minds move towards truths. Perhaps that is why we nowadays instinctively mistrust anyone who pontificates: and as a matter of experience if we examine the writings of the pontificators, people skilled in a 'way of saying things', we invariably find that their style is bad, that falsity has crept in somewhere. The writer is not being faithful to the movement of his mind: he is taking things for granted, and he fills us to-day with uneasiness.

That is admirable prose: one might say, what one cannot say of many of Mr. Dobrée's extracts, that it is

beautiful prose. But will anyone say without book whether it is the prose of Mr. Dobrée or Newman?

This Victorian Attic was wanting in three directions: it was not loud enough for public presentation, not obtrusive enough for private display, and it lacked the *susurrus magicus* of Browne or De Quincey. It shrank, as all Attic prose does, from the blatant, the far-fetched, the *cantabile*: therefore, by a kind of Hegelian necessity, it produced the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Yellow Book*, and Walter Pater; agonies of urgent supplication, sudden poppies, and the ivy on the firm flesh of the young god's forehead. Much of it seems very dreadful now, but we had to have it and we have lived through it. So far, well. But it left behind it something that is not so well, which might get exaggerated into a Puritan aversion from the joy of self-expression, or an Anabaptist revolt from the common morality of literature: into an alternation of witch-hunts and orgies. Mr. Dobrée watches his flock with pastoral anxiety. 'It is written apparently in the *tones* of every day, though here and there we can detect traces of literary forms – "only that which" instead of "only what": "how to act" instead of "what to do": it is extraordinarily difficult to rid one's self of turns of that kind.' He is somewhat kinder when they rid themselves of grammar altogether and start 'experimenting'. But does Mr. Dobrée suggest that *what* and *that which*, *how to act* and *what to do* are interchangeable terms, like *would* and *should*, perhaps? Must we all write – and talk – a kind of Basic Slag English, and abjure all buns from which the currants have not been extracted?

I have dwelt on the point because it seems to me that there is a real danger in the cult of under-writing, under the pretext of fidelity, honesty, or what not. It is the old question of the voice again. 'One would like to think that all of us will come to the stage of refusing to write what we would not, indeed, could not, say.' But I must ask: say when, where, to whom and what about? 'We must be able to imagine that he is talking to himself. In no other way can he achieve *a* style, which is the sound of his voice, which is the man himself.'¹ Yes, again: but talking to himself while he is thinking or after he has thought it all out? Mr. Dobrée means the second, I know. He means what Buffon meant: the 'three fundamental disciplines', which Mr. Dobrée inculcates, are those to which Buffon subjected himself rigorously ten hours a day for forty years. And the next generation found him intolerably 'literary'. He had achieved *a* style: it was the sound of his voice, which was Buffon himself. But it was not a voice which anyone wanted to hear. What they did want was Chateaubriand, who never composed a sentence in his mind, and admitted that he could only think when he had a pen in his hand. It is an ominous analogy. Perhaps, as Mr. Dobrée thinks, our prose will take the direction of 'greater flexibility and a more curious following of our mental processes'. I wonder. Is it not just possible that the next decade will be so tired of hearing Mr. Brewer, Mr. Stewer, Mr. Whiddon, Mr. Davy, Mr. Gurney, Mrs. Henry Hawk and Miss Thomasine Coble, y,

¹ Mr. Dobrée should have warned him that, if he does, he will be followed through the streets of Cambridge with shouts of Fake! Drivel! Silly! The addressees of these endearments are Lamb, Stevenson and Sir Arthur Eddington. See *Discriminations*, *passim*.

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all following the movement of their own minds aloud, that the call will be heard again for fullness, resonance and authority?

Cicero, who knew more about prose than most of us, had his troubles with the under-writers too. 'I know', he says, 'that Demosthenes can always lower himself to the level of his theme. But can Lysias always rise to the height of his? When you ask me to use my private, intimate manner for all purposes and on all occasions, I must answer that you are contracting prose to your own capacity, and I would have it as free as the nature of the subject requires.' Again, he was thinking primarily of the spoken word, and while he would have understood and agreed with Mr. Dobrée's insistence on the vocal quality of prose, he would have been puzzled by 'the ordinary voice'. 'Naturally', he would say, 'no citizen, no man of liberal intelligence, speaks in an extraordinary voice, any more than he uses extraordinary words or walks in an extraordinary way. But by extraordinary we mean not suited to the occasion. Do you only use your voices now in private conversation?' And we should have to explain that so it is.

Mr. Dobrée touches on the question whether the English voice was more highly modulated, more strongly cadenced, in the seventeenth century than now. I do not think he has taken quite the right point. My recollection assures me that the private voice of men who were growing up between 1820 and 1840 was very much like our own. But when they read aloud, quoted Latin verses, or recited some favourite passage of contemporary

oratory, the Dormant Thunder of Canning, Disraeli's Extinct Volcanoes or Bright's Angel of Death, this voice at once assumed a resonance and variety which would in 1937 seem intolerably histrionic. But it was to them perfectly natural: the last man I heard using it in public – in a modified form, it is true, but quite noticeably – was Lord Chaplin, and if he had been required to constrain his voice to a conversational monotone, I doubt if he could have spoken at all. Whether there was, through medieval schools and liturgical Latin, any real affiliation with Roman speech, I do not know. But the general effect, the muffled resonance with which the sentence was delivered, must I think have been very like the Latin *mugitus*.

This voice has ceased to sound. But so long as it was there, always moving towards utterance when the subject required, it naturally generated the diction and manner which Mr. Dobrée ascribes to late-Victorian prose. I have already quoted Mr. Dobrée's sentences. 'We can be sure of nothing . . . we are on the verge of amazing changes . . . we feel that what is important is not so much truth as the way our minds move towards truths.' There is nothing new in that. Sir Frederick Pollock was saying it in 1880, Kingsley in 1864. But they were saying it out loud: Sir Frederick (in his *Spinoza*) in the coloured, cadenced style, a sort of Augustan Romantic, learnt from Macaulay: Kingsley (in *Madam How and Lady Why*) in the rather distressing fantastic-facetious of the Christian Socialist lecturer (it is all over Hughes, for example, and is, I suppose, a by-birth of Carlyle and the Germans). Indeed, one might follow

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the sentiment still farther back. Miss Martineau (in the *Illustrations of Political Economy*) gives voice to it in the intense and gritty diction in which Philosophic Radicals wrote Blue Books, from which descends the flat and accurate prose of our Government Departments.

An undergraduate, attending a lecture somewhat above his capacity, recorded in his notebook that there is a sisterly and disasterly in human affairs. There is, all the same. The Victorians apprehended it, rightly, as an alternation of analysis and synthesis, a movement from one provisional system to another, a dialectic with stopping-places of orthodoxy. We have rather lost sight of the orthodoxy and the synthesis. But they are on the way. A clerisy to which unemployment is unknown is probably inclined to linger on the orthodoxy it has reached, especially if it feels itself to be a weighty element in the State: it will tend therefore to speak in the public, authoritative manner of the insider addressing the outsider, the qualified telling the unqualified: in Mr. Dobrée's happy phrase, to present rather than to communicate. As it ceases to count, it will use its private voice more and more, if it is in earnest: or take to shouting because no one stops to listen. So we get in the ancient world the quiet, unwritten prose of the philosophic sects, and the violently over-written, acrobatic prose of the Asians, of whom a Roman said that they had to use the wrong words because they didn't know the right ones – a criticism which seems to me to be most widely and alarmingly applicable to-day. In both we see an aversion from the pure and central tradition of freedom, 'as wide as the nature of the subject requires', and though the

PROSE, OLD AND NEW

stylistic troubles of the ancients are not ours, I think the analogy is worth considering. An exaggerated fear of 'literature' on the one side, and an undisciplined indulgence in the 'experimental' on the other, though they could not create a tradition, might easily destroy one, and prose is the one art to which, in the nature of things, tradition is essential. It is the medium of communication between the ages, and a failure of tradition would reduce us to the state of those savages whose language changes so fast that the old people cannot make out what the young people are saying.

THE BUFFALO IN THE BOOKSHOP¹

IN his last chapter, Mr. Potter throws out a hint, or a promise, of another book to come, to which *The Muse in Chains* is only the prolegomena. I shall be very glad to read it when it appears, because in that chapter there are many ideas which deserve to be expounded and developed at length. In fact, if I were suddenly commissioned by some Golden Dustman to organize a new University, I think I should send for Mr. Potter and offer him the Chair of English Literature forthwith. I am not quite sure that the experiment would be a success, but I am certain that the results would be both amusing and instructive. Meanwhile, his book will cause acute annoyance to many people who deserve to be annoyed, and they will soothe their feelings by observing that Mr. Potter's manner is sometimes noisy and his style sometimes cheap. They will be right. But when he has recovered his temper, I think, or at least I hope, that he will give us something of a kind which is much needed to-day.

Charles Holmes, when he was Slade Professor at Oxford, once started a course for connoisseurs. I did not hear it, but he began, I was told, somehow thus: 'Not many of you are likely to be artists, but many of you will inherit collections which you will wish to enjoy, to take care of, and perhaps to increase. It is to those that these lectures are addressed.' This was really the accent of the old humanist education. 'Not many of you', it said, 'will

¹ *The Muse in Chains*, by Stephen Potter.

edit a text or write a history, though you may amuse yourselves by translating an eclogue or turning out a copy of verses. But you are the heirs to a civilization which is most fully recorded in books. That is your spiritual estate; to enjoy, to develop, and, if you can, to enlarge. So open your Latin grammar at page one, and learn *mensa*, a table.' Suppose, now, one were to transpose this exordium from the classical to the English key, how would it run? Somehow thus, I think. 'Few of you, I hope and trust, will be moved to write, because few of you will have anything to say worth reading. But you are going into a world where language is still the main instrument for the exchange of ideas: where a great part of your life will be spent in speaking and listening, far too much of it in reading the newspapers, and certain hours at least in writing letters. English Literature is the record of those who have practised this universal habit of verbal communication, in English, with the greatest skill and success; most forcibly or delicately or lucidly or expressively.'

So far, so good. But what is the equivalent of *mensa*, a table? Mr. Potter, in his historic survey of Anglistic studies, points out that they began in Scotland, where English had something of the strangeness and prestige of a foreign or classical language. 'Pop's Homer is a vara gude buke tu.' Then the new London University took them up, and through the Northern Universities they spread and gained in repute and consequence, till in the end first Cambridge and then Oxford had to capitulate. These historic chapters are most entertaining, and the sketches of Saintsbury, Raleigh and the unfortunate

Churton Collins are drawn with great sympathy and good humour. But all the while the reader has the feeling, which Mr. Potter, of course, means him to have, that something is going wrong. What was it?

The old classical curriculum, in which after many deviations and some backslidings, I have come most resolutely to believe, was based on a close study of words and sentences, and covered a narrow range of selected writers. Our English schools, it seems to me, have always been hampered by the delusion that because the language is easy, the range can be greatly extended: with the reservation that, as there ought always to be something stiff and boring in an academic course, a little Middle English is all to the good. Now, it is perfectly true that an Athenian boatman knew more about Attic Greek than Porson, but how many teachers make it their business to see that their pupils know English even as well as Porson knew Greek? Or (and I ask this after reading some of the examination questions set last year at Cambridge) to know it themselves?

The Professor of Civil Law in one of the Northern Universities once told me this story. He had a pupil who, though of good abilities in most directions, could never grasp the distinction between voluntary and involuntary homicide. At last he said: 'You know what voluntary means, I suppose?' 'Oh, yes,' said the young jurist, confidently, 'it is the piece of music the organist plays when you are coming out of church.' Mr. I. A. Richards's experiments seem to prove that it is quite possible for even mature students of English literature at our Universities to be equally hazy about the

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meaning of common words, and still hazier about the construction of a sentence. Are you surprised? I am not. English, with its immense vocabulary and its subtle syntax, is an exceedingly difficult language. It is not to be taken for granted: it has to be learnt. I know I never post a proof without that uncomfortable feeling that used to overtake us when we had shown up a Latin prose, the uneasy conviction that there was a howler somewhere. And by a howler, I mean, in English, anything which shows that you have not sufficient command of the inherited vocabulary and syntax to say exactly what you want to say.

Great writers are those who have succeeded best in saying what they mean, in such a way that other people like to hear them; who have handled the medium of language most precisely, appropriately and attractively. To give a man classical rank, the attraction must be long lasting, and one of the assets of the old Greek and Latin curriculum was a canon of good writers, the Sixteen Books of Oxford, established by the judgment of the world, which has for example consigned the plays of Seneca, which the Elizabethans loved, to the rubbish basket, and enthroned Lucretius, whom the Elizabethans never read. I think Mr. Potter would promise me in advance that in our University there should be no turning over of the rubbish basket, and that the running theme of all his discourses will be: this is how it is done. 'Of course', he will say, 'while you are growing up, there is no great harm in drawing out a table showing the ripostes and rejoinders of the Martin Marprelate controversy, though you would be much

better employed in making up your minds who Datchery was, or finding the mistake in *The Nebuly Coat*. But try something a little more serious. Trace, for example, the formation and growth of a Left Wing Ideology, or write a letter to a group of Tory diehards telling them not to badger the Prime Minister. Having satisfied yourselves with the result, see how Hooker and Swift did it.'

'The great writers', Mr. Potter says, 'establish differences. Self-knowledge is a knowledge of productive difference.' That is well put, though I think I should say useful rather than productive. Mr. Potter is more concerned with the writing of English, and I with the understanding of what is written or spoken; and I look to our School of English Literature rather to maintain a high and critical standard of apprehension, than to add to the volume of print. But I heartily agree that a large part of the talktalk about influences and relationships could be with great advantage thrown into a single book, an expansion perhaps of Mr. Ghosh's useful *Annals of English Literature*, to be laid up for reference when wanted. Of course, there will be no examinations and no theses, and in this matter Mr. Potter has furnished a warning, so earthshaking in the monumentality of its implications, that it deserves a verse-paragraph to itself.

Professor Karl W. Bigelow
Of the University of Buffalo,
Has published a treatise
On How to Write a Thesis.

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But having gone so far in Mr. Potter's company, I am not sure that I can go the rest of the way. He writes with a certain resentment against his own schooling, which I cannot feel, because, except for doing three plays of Shakespeare in Verity's excellent edition, I never had a word of instruction in English literature in my life. But I think he underrates very much the importance of exact and even microscopic verbal work in early life. It was not so important two or three generations ago, when church-going, learning by heart, reading aloud, and the Scripture realization lesson were widespread family habits. Now, we must reckon with the fact, that classical English is becoming a foreign idiom, and the facilities which German-American offers for saying something that sounds as if it meant something, are, I think, having much the same effect on our literary tastes that tinned food is having on our physical appetites. Very likely the language will have to surrender: and we shall all have to choke down our disgust, and learn to talk of power-politics and art-form antecedents and the literary-critical approach, as if we had been cradled in Marburg and reared in Michigan. But the great body of our literature is written in English, not in jargon, and if the idiom can no longer be absorbed by habit, it must be acquired by study. No one is likely to make much of the 'intensity and completeness' with which Shakespeare or Browning 'expresses a different shape of the human spirit', if he, or she, does not know what the words they use mean, or cannot look at least a little way down the vista of their associations. The young lady of twenty-two, a graduate of her university,

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who quoted Macbeth (this I have seen myself) in the form:

Wake Duncan with thy knocking?
I wouldst thou couldst:

clearly was not ripe for Shakespeare at all. But when it came to Greek tragedy (time allowed three hours) and the mournful exaltation of Question (1):

Tragedy represents not men but action and
the unhappy element in life: discuss this:

I have no doubt that she could babble like the brook that runneth by.

I wish Mr. Potter would turn this over in his mind before he writes his second volume. I am incurably distrustful of that 'human spirit'. As I am equally distrustful of examination papers, we may be able to arrange a compromise which the Golden Dustman could approve. But I rather think that to get that University going properly we shall have to catch them very young indeed. In the meantime, as their pastors and masters could learn much from Mr. Potter's book, I hope they will read it – and not throw away the dust-jacket.

T U T T Y

FOR many years I was haunted by a ghost word, which has suddenly come back at me again. I first met it in a Dutch-English Dictionary in the form:

niet: nothing, naught, tutty.

I consulted W. P. Ker who knew everything, only to find that it was the one thing he did not know. Growing interested, I pursued it into other languages, always with the same result. The Portuguese lexicographer believed that *tutty* was the English for *nada*. The Spaniard, the Italian, the Swede, all entertained the same curious conviction. Clearly there must be in the world some archetypal dictionary in which *nihil*, or *rien* or *niente* is glossed: Anglicé *tutty*, and from which all pocket dictionaries are derived. Where is it?

Tutty returned to me in this wise. An enterprising dealer, some years ago, seems to have bought up the sheets of an English and French dictionary

containing

the pronunciation of the english in the french sounds,
scotch words from

W. Scott's novels, etc., etc.

BY SMITH.

My copy is dated 1907, but from internal evidence I should date the original to the eighteen-thirties. The Iron Road has been invented, but *gare* does not yet mean a railway station, only a wet-dock. I should rather like

to see the conversation of Andrew Fairservice, the ejaculations of Mause Headrigg, or the classical periods of

Ride your ways, Godfrey Bartram,

with all the scotch words rendered into french BY SMITH. *Voici la dernière baguette que je couperai dans les bois estimables d'Ellangowan.* But contemporary french readers, baffled by Stomach, were no doubt relieved and encouraged to learn that it was only *écossais pour Stomach.*

However, this has nothing, or tutty, to do with my ghost. Smith has got it, pronounced teut'-ti, and it means tutie. Tutie, pronounced too-te, is there also, and it means tutty. We seem to be moving in a circle. But about this tutty there is no mystery. Littré and O.E.D. are agreed that it is a crude oxide of zinc. It was formerly used in astringent ointments and lotions. Elizabethan soldiers laid in lots of it before going forth to war. It is good for Rhewms in the Eyes. The better sorts are ponderous and somewhat sonorous. *Cf. pompholyx.* I think I know Pompholyx, and the epithets seem to me to do great justice to his attributes. But it is a hot day; *O.E.D.* too is somewhat ponderous, and I feel I know enough. It is pleasanter to read on about the other Tutty, the nose-gay or Tuzzy-muzzy; about the Heath, which beareth his flowers in tutteys or Tufts; and the tything men of Hungerford who carry Tutti-poles or wands wreathed with flowers. But of my tutty - nada, niet, naught.

It is a very hot day, and I can do no more. I sincerely hope that it is not a Bad Word, but on that the character

TUTTY

and experience of various persons whom I have consulted satisfy me. If it were, they would know it. But I should be really grateful to anyone who would solve the riddle and so lay the ghost, because Tutty is becoming like one of those words heard in dreams, words of incomprehensible and infinite significance, which seem to impart at once the secret of the Universe and the winner of the next Grand National. I can only offer one conjecture, and that is, that it arose out of a misreading of nosegay as no segay. *Cf.*, as the lexicons say, Nosmo King. The poor foreigner asked an English friend what no segay meant, and the friend replied, 'It means nothing.' Candidly, my conjecture seems to me to be pretty putid, even as conjectures go. But I have known worse. I have read *The Place Names of Kent* by Dr. Wallenberg of the University of Upsala. And, as I have twice observed, it is an exceedingly hot day.

NOTE

This appeal brought me many kind answers. It appears that some dictionary-maker must have run together two different German words. There is of course the ordinary *nicht* meaning nothing: but there is another, meaning crude oxide of zinc. And, as Bywater said, when he found that *sicilicus* meant the forty-eighth part of an hour, or a comma, I – didn't – know – that.

THE NEW CORTEGIANO

I RECENTLY picked up a tale in one of our more trivial magazines. There was nothing in the story: a benighted motorist receiving hospitality from an old gentleman in a decayed house. But my eye was caught by one sentence. The host said:

‘I wish the place was in better trim’;

and the narrator comments:

. In better trim! Who but he could have said it?

Well, I might have said it myself. I had never realized before what picturesque old johnnies those of us who have passed the years of discretion must seem to those who have not yet reached them, or how much innocent pleasure we can give by saying our pieces right.

While I was indulging, not without complacency, the mood thus indicated, the library sent me Mr. Compton Mackenzie’s *Literature in My Time*. I read it with great and increasing interest as I found that starting from different points and pursuing different paths, we had arrived at the same end. Mr. Mackenzie and I are of an age: he is more concerned with the proceedings of literature, I am interested in the movement of thought which they disclose. But we are both in the throes of the same nightmare. The culture which the nineteenth century received and we supposed it would transmit is

over and done with. We are left carrying the baby, and the baby is dead.

'Montaigne is the first French writer whom a gentleman would be ashamed not to have read.' That sentence of Hallam's has always seemed to me to place our nineteenth-century culture with perfect aptness. It was still the culture of the Renaissance. We had added, for historic reasons, certain moral and political requirements of our own. But in all essentials, Hallam's gentleman, like Macaulay's naval officer, 'a man versed in the theory and practice of his calling, and steeled against all the dangers of battle and tempest, yet of cultivated mind and polished manners' was still the Cortegiano. And the Cortegiano is no longer required.

I approach the question from another side and I try to call up the picture of Bagehot and George Grote as Tired Business Men. Some years ago an international memorandum on Tariffs, of English authorship, was sent about the Continent for signature. It covered much the same ground as the Merchants' Petition of 1820, and while I deplored, I could not help sharing, the amused contempt with which foreign business men regarded it. I have always thought that one of the most remarkable achievements of our early nineteenth-century thought was the assimilation of the new science of economics into the general body of culture, as a topic within the common framework of reference. The Petition of 1820 was a theorem in economic philosophy. The Memorandum of 1924 was just the talk of bread-winners in the 9.15. To Grote or Bagehot it would have seemed incredible that

such flimsy, uninformed, ill-reasoned stuff should ever be put forward as the considered view of the commercial community of England. I do not suppose the average business man of 1820 was really more familiar with Adam Smith than the average squire with Montaigne. But if they were not in the stream, they were on the bank, they knew the stream was there. That stream seems to have plunged into a gulf.

It may reappear, as ancient culture re-emerged at the Renaissance, or the Middle Ages in the eighteenth century, and, inasmuch as modern life moves in quicker tempo, the world may not have so long to wait. The recapture of medieval feeling by the Romantics was like the reopening of a channel long damned by a convulsion of the past. In the mid-nineteenth century, the educated man had a clear run back to his own origins, to Homer and the Parthenon along one line, to Rome or Palestine along another, by way of Kemble to his Germanic cradle, by way of Max Müller to those misty heights inhabited by the virtuous Aryans, who seemed to bear so signal a resemblance to Rugby boys preparing for New Zealand. His education, his religion, the sight of his fields if he was a countryman, of his streets if he was a townsman, all impressed upon his mind the antiquity and continuity of his civilization, while the social order at home, the balance of land and industry, the counterchange of urban and rural ideas, preserved and emphasized its unity. I was thinking, while I read Mr. Mackenzie's book, how a writer, as competent and serious, would have treated Literature in My Time in 1884. Half the book at least would have been concerned with history, theology,

economics, public affairs: we should read of the sensation provoked by *Vestiges of Creation*, of the impact of Mansell on an angry world and of John Mill's response. To Mr. Mackenzie literature means novels, poetry, and Mr. Santayana. Whatever hopes we may nurse of the continuity of our culture into the future, its unity is shattered.

Whether that continuity is really ended, whether 'Plato, and Dante, and Shakespeare' are, as Mr. James Stephens thinks, really finished, whether it is not that we are too nervous to face them, or whether after all we are not simply passing through one of those recurrent phases of spring-cleaning when the second-rate, the less important, the rubbish are sorted out for the back passage, the spare room and the bonfire — ἀδελφον παντὶ πλὴν ἡ τῷ θεῷ. But that unity of culture is socially desirable, that it is of the very greatest importance that there should be a common framework of reference by which men of all avocations can make their ideas known to each other, will not, I imagine, be denied by anyone. And to judge by certain symptoms that occasionally come to one's notice, I am afraid we must go down very deep to build it up again. Macaulay was much incensed to find that a young peer of intellectual tastes had never read *Don Sebastian*: he put it down to Puseyism, whereas, really, it was a case of spring-cleaning. What would Macaulay have said if he had known that some day in his own University, 'serious and professed students of English literature' would never have heard of the Flood, would not recognize a sonnet when they saw one, would not know what *encroachment* meant till they had looked it up in the

dictionary and would then complain of it as a 'hard word'? Yet, from Mr. I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* it would appear that so it is. I once saw a little Yorkshireman emerging, flushed and resentful, from a Committee where he had been badgered, and muttering as he went 'Beasts at Ephesus, beasts at Ephesus'. I thought it was a *trait de mœurs* worth relating at a dinner-party. But it fell very flat. What beasts? Why Ephesus?

A common vocabulary is not so difficult to create. Broadcasting and crosswords coming together have already greatly enlarged our *copia verborum*. In the last few years I have noticed that villagers now use without self-consciousness many words which twenty years ago, if they had known them in print, they would never have uttered. They may still get them wrong: an old railway porter the other day reminded me that in the eye of the law the Bank of England was a Private Interview. But that will soon be mended, and I can foresee, though I cannot quite define, the consequences that must follow when we have learnt, like the Latins, all of us to speak with the whole of our language, and to speak it without shyness or resentment. In a scuffle over tickets in a Milan tram I discovered the Italian for 'Now then, none of that'. 'Basta, basta,' it ran, 'no fatte quì delle polemiche.' Broadcasting, too, might restore our sensitiveness to speech-rhythms and so make good, in part at least, the harm we have sustained by the decline in church-going. The Church of England service is a great literary function, and it would be difficult to assess the atmospheric effect on our culture of such diction and such cadences reiterated to audiences, necessarily, if un-

consciously, in a mood of special receptiveness, from one generation to another.

This increased command of language seems to me, in making up the account, to be the most positive advantage with which we have to reckon. Against it, I set the failure of the common stock of reference and allusion. In *Fiction and the Reading Public*, Mrs. Leavis insists, with justice, on the strongly literary character of the selfmade culture of the Victorian working classes. The earnest young workman – Cooper in real life, Alton Locke in fiction – really gave himself a classical education not different in essence from the curriculum of Oxford and Cambridge. He read the great books – Milton, Locke, Adam Smith, Gibbon – and as they were written in an unfamiliar idiom he read them attentively, sentence by sentence, with dictionary and note-book, as his more fortunate contemporaries, if of like inclinations, might have read Thucydides and Tacitus. The writings and addresses of that famous and, to my taste, very disagreeable rhetorician, W. J. Fox, are the result and the proof. They assume that ‘Plato, and Dante, and Shakespeare’, or at least the range of ideas which those names stand for, really mattered to the lower middle classes or the respectable working man. And the audience thought so, or pretended they thought so, too.

Was it pretence? Did Northcliffe, Pearson and Newnes only call a bluff which had really ceased to take anybody in? Not altogether. My belief, from what I have read and what I remember, is that there was, in the mid-nineteenth century, certainly to the eighties and even into

the nineties, a far more widely diffused interest in the culture-bearers and their doings than we have known before or since. I cannot find it in the eighteenth century: Johnson was something of a national figure, 'Oddity, they call him', but no one else. From the fifties onward, I can trace a growing pride – such as I imagine an Athenian must have felt in the possession of Sophocles – in having such men among us. And this pride, or interest, went a long way down in society. I was standing on a railway platform one day in the summer of 1896 when a man, certainly not of the aesthetic class (I guessed him to be a Gravesend pilot), opened his paper and exclaimed to a friend 'Millais is dead'.

There was about the mid-Victorian culture, in the after-glow of which Mr. Mackenzie and I grew up, a certain unitary quality, of doing, thinking and appreciating, which will be found, I believe, to be the note of all great and characteristic cultures. One can, of course, see the dangers ahead of a universal competence and a universal connoisseurship. The Victorian culture escaped them, but at a cost which we are still paying. It did not run down into a universal amateurishness. But it was doubly fractured: vertically, into professionalism, laterally, along its weakest stratum into – let us adopt the later word and call it high-brow and low-brow. The warning note was struck by the P.R.B. The artists of the forties, Landseer, Mulready, the cartoonists of the Houses of Parliament, meant to make, and were accepted as making, a universal appeal. When the dust of the fifties has settled down, we find the artists out for different game. Whether the pictures on Mr. Millbank's

walls were better or worse than those which a generation later his successors were meekly ordering from Rossetti and Burne-Jones is not now the question. But there is no doubt that even to see a Burne-Jones requires some special training, while everyone, from that standing authority on art, Henry Marquess of Lansdowne, to the Academy porter, could get the point of Mulready's 'Wedding Gown'.

But art, as a certain exhibition has so ignominiously demonstrated, is not our business in the world. *Excudent alii!* The break-up of the mid-Victorian reading and writing unity was a far more serious matter. A certain failure of absorptive capacity is perceptible in the sixties: in a private library formed about that time, for example, one is fairly certain to find Grote and Milman, and quite certain not to find Gardiner. The sphere of interest is contracting: it had room for the new biology – Darwin and Huxley naturally struck home on a nation still pre-occupied about its religion and always fond of natural history. But the new physics made little appeal; Faraday, who died in 1867, had long been an object of popular regard; Hallam's gentleman would have been ashamed not to know, in general terms, what he, or Lyell, had done and what they stood for. Clerk Maxwell was beyond the scope of the gentleman's ideas.

One example, because it lies in the way of my own studies, has always struck me forcibly. Our national habits, the excellence of our communications and the small area within which we have to live, early combined to create a type of literature which still has a very great diffusion, the literature of the road. One of the rules of

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composition is that it should contain a modicum of instruction in antiquities, architecture, local history and so forth. I have constantly observed that the information thus agreeably imparted represents the state of knowledge in about 1850. I can trace Kemble and Wright everywhere – usually in fragments of long-exploded theories. Isaac Taylor and, within a narrowing circle, Seebohm, were still capable of being absorbed; Maitland and Haverfield were not; and it would be safe to guess that Taylor had more purchasers in one county than the Place Name Society has subscribers in all England.

It is not, or not altogether, I think, that Liberal Curiosity is extinct, that Hallam's gentleman has failed out of the land. The interest, for example, in anything which Sir James Jeans or Sir Arthur Eddington writes is rather like the old excitement over Huxley. But curiosity has undoubtedly turned away from what was, from what always had been, its most obvious food, the art, the literature, the memorials of the past. Looking back, I think it did not so much turn of its own accord, as it was frightened off. Mr. Mackenzie speaks of 'making things difficult for machine man' as an ideal which we should all pursue. I most heartily agree. Only, if he is scared away, he will not know whether you are being difficult or not. If, as the newest culture tells us in verse of strange construction, 'the pianola replaces Sappho's barbitos', surely the right thing is to see that machine man gets good tunes on the pianola, not to take the barbitos and beat the poor fellow about the head with it, as the late Victorians of all degrees were only too prompt to do.

This vertical comminution of a universal culture into

separate provinces, each of which is nobody else's business, was no doubt assisted by the development of modern studies at the newer public schools, and the gradual conversion of the Universities – through the development of competitive examination for the Indian and Home Civil Services – from *studia generalia* into professional training courses. They resisted stubbornly, and by their resistance did protract the survival of the unitary culture. One of the characters in *Sinister Street* speaks of 'the spirit, filtered down through modern conditions, from Elizabethan England. Take a man connected with the legislative class, give him at least enough taste not to be ashamed of poetry, and enough energy not to be ashamed of football, and there you are.' To poetry add history, theology, scholarship and the like, and you have, I think, the corresponding man of the fifties. And when we go back to that mid-Victorian time we find, I think, that the culture thus defined was not only less constricted in quality but more widely diffused. Brassey, the contractor, was, in his way, a man of that type: so was Armstrong the engineer: so pre-eminently was Bagehot the country banker. Indeed, anyone can verify the facts for himself by taking down a volume of the *Athenaeum* at random, for any year between 1850 and 1880, observing the range of interests it serves, and then reflecting that the *Athenaeum* yielded its fortunate proprietor an income of over £7000 a year. For the general movement of English thought in the mid-Victorian period, and somewhat later, it is the prime and indispensable document and I sometimes wonder whether hereafter the *Listener* will not serve the same purpose,

whether a unitary middle-brow culture is not coming into existence again, to gather up once more the specialisms into which Victorian culture split.

But when I try to forecast the content and animating drive of the next culture, I am at a stand. At times I feel that our troubles are only the rush and fret of a stream at a stickle and that there may be clear deep ranges close ahead: the golden freshness of the fifties was won by the grimness and lucidity, the set teeth and open eyes with which the early Victorians fought down their own fears. At other times, I feel that precedents are useless, that the moral continuity of Western history has been broken at last. Society in the mid-nineteenth century was still primitive Indo-Germanic society with some slight speeding up of cart-wheels and looms, and it thought of itself, for the most part, less as a departure than as a consummation. The fundamental conceptions of the West – Lords and Commons, Patriarch and Family, Farmer and Craftsman, Combat and Chastity – still persisted. What is becoming of them, I do not know. What will come out of them in the next age, I cannot guess. But, to follow one line of reflection only, I doubt very much whether there can be any continuity between a civilization based on automatic child-bearing and a civilization based on regulated child-bearing. The detachment of sex from its primeval framework of social union and domestic authority, has in my own time produced consequences so observable that I can set no end to the consequences it may still produce. Among them, perhaps, is the solution of the problem over which Mr. Mackenzie and I are distressing ourselves.

This is going rather deep. More immediately, I seem to be aware of a shortening of the span of attention, an increased susceptibility to distraction, which as it proceeds must tend to make all responses shallower and less memorable. Miss Sitwell has somewhere compared the old rhythm of life to the clop-clop of a horse's hoofs; of the new, to the *brrr* of motor traffic. I am clear at least that, like books, events had a much longer life even forty years ago than they have now: they sank in, they were absorbed into tradition, whereas now they seem to bound off into oblivion like pebbles thrown on to a frozen stream. One could still see tradition being made in the ancient way, by the recital and collation of precedents, the loss of the *Victoria*, for instance, bringing up the loss of the *Captain* and the *Birkenhead*, just as culture was made by the acceptance and inculcation of the standard books, pictures, music and even journeys.

One cannot hold the newspapers to blame because they could hardly have helped themselves. It is no doubt unfortunate that capital should be committed to the enterprise of keeping the public mind in the easily fluttered, easily satisfied state of barbarism or childhood. But when once a race has lost the conception of Liberal Curiosity it is lost to civilization, and whether it succumbs to the boosters of the press or the terrorists of the higher culture makes no matter. Of the two, the terrorists seem to me to be the worse enemies of civilization. A true, a sound, a social culture must be middle-brow, the high-brow elements serving as exploratory antennae, to discover and capture new ideas for the middle-brow mass to assimilate. The better it is fed, the freer, and more

various its diet, the less likely it is to get poisoned or lose strength. The mid-Victorian culture was essentially middle-brow: in judgment it was not selective, in creation it was not masterly. But it did lay hold: it furnished a very large class – broadly, the ten-pound householders and their leaders – with a common stock of philosophy and a medium of inter-communication, and as it had little or no use for books which only ‘trained critics’ could get through, so it was under no necessity of soothing the alarms of the little clerk by addressing him as a Tired Business Man.

Of one of his more disagreeable characters, that is to say, of one of his characters, Mr. Aldous Huxley makes an acquaintance remark ‘She had excellent table manners. People of that class always have’. There are people who cannot afford to eat cheese with their knives or touch pie-crust with their fingers. And just as those who are habitually well fed at home are most readily content with cold boiled beef abroad, so, one has noticed, people who are really grounded in the tradition – Saintsbury was a fine example – can take their ease with *The Green Hat* or *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* without the uneasy feeling which afflicts the others that they ought to be construing their next ten pages of *Ulysses*. They are in no danger from the terrorists, whose standard-bearer in this age seems to be Mrs. Leavis. They do not go into precipitate mourning every time the really final decease of Scott or Byron is announced. They do not quail when they hear that Jane Austen (unlike Aphra Behn) could not write, though they may blench a little when they find that Mrs. Leavis (unlike Jane Austen) can write *religio-ethical*.

'Obsequies ain't used in England no more, now - it's gone out. We say orgies now, in England. It's a word that's made up out'n the Greek *orgo*, outside, and the Hebrew *jeesum*, to cover up.'

An attentive, discriminating and judicial attitude to literature is what we all desire to see as widely diffused as possible. I own that the popularity of *If Winter Comes* made me miserable, and what the Christ Child was doing in its blurbs I have never yet been able to make out. Perhaps that phenomenon will some day be taken to mark the nadir of our age in sense and taste. But the mischief of the sniff-brow pose, even when it does not frighten the young out of the honest, immature enjoyment, which is the lure of attention and the foundation of judgment, is that it makes criticism the clap-trap of a coterie and scholarship contemptible. 'It is difficult to account for the acrimony of a scholiast', though Disraeli offered an explanation which modern psychology would perhaps confirm. For Mr. Richards's own work I have a great regard. But when I compare the lucubrations with which certain of his pupils are beginning to favour us, with, for example, a piece of criticism, so perceptive, so truthful and so old-fashioned as Mr. Sitwell's *Dickens*, I foresee for Mr. Richards the fate which has already overtaken Strachey, and which of old befell the sage *quem discipuli trucidaverunt stylis suis*.

The statisticians tell us that certain phenomena, weather for instance, move in cycles of different periods, and that when the crests or troughs of two or three cycles chance to coincide, the result is a climatic Age of Gold or Mud. We are, I suggest, just now in such a trough, the

coincident point of two calamities which are working themselves out. One of course was the stoppage of education in the war. I am not speaking only of the schools and Universities, but far more of that intangible instruction which forty imparts to twenty-five, twenty-five to twenty-four and so on down the line. For some years the natural processes of youthful education, the discoveries, the enthusiasms, the repulsions, the eternal dialectic of assertion and denial, were suspended in the interests of the quick decision, and of all the consequences the one that is most abundantly clear to me and my contemporaries is that though we were probably quite as foolish as Mr. Richards's pupils we were incomparably better informed. We had heard of the Flood. Though 'no ornithologists', we did not query Miss Rossetti's statement that a robin sings in the holly-bush. We were not 'serious and professed students' of anything very much, but we did not move in a great fog of ignorance, fitfully illuminated with flashes of a feigned, and unconvincing, contempt for everything we happened not to know.

The other cycle is of longer period. We are, *in hoc interim seculo*, footing the bill for the great Victorian omission. It is curious to observe in history how inexplicably things go wrong: there was for example nothing in Roman history, law or temper, to suggest that the Romans would muddle their Christian problem. I suppose an under-secretary was down with influenza, the clerk looked out the wrong precedent, and the machine once started could not be stopped. If one could take a stand in 1837, look round and ask: 'They have reformed Parliament, the Municipalities and the Poor Law: Free

Trade is only a matter of time: I hear they are drafting a County Councils Bill. What will they do next?' I do not think the imaginary observer could hesitate to answer: 'Look at Brougham and his Institutes: look at Grote and his London University: they will reform the Grammar Schools. They will probably create a Board of Intermediate Education and I should not wonder if they brought Arnold from Rugby and put him in charge.' It was so obviously the next thing to be done, and no one thought of doing it.

This was the line of weakness along which Victorian culture was fractured. The Middle Classes, 'the wealth and intelligence of the nation, the pride and glory of the British name', were stratified along the seam where the public schools met the grammar schools. With the social and political consequences I am not concerned. For our culture it was a major disaster. A culture is an area of inter-communication, living and alert in all directions at once, and in the late Victorian age the educated classes, already splitting into specialized interests, were dragging behind them a growing mass with no interests at all. It had thrown up the sponge, and was becoming to all intents and purposes a proletariat, and it was Northcliffe, I think, who first apprehended its existence and diagnosed its quality.

My impression is that in the decade before the war it was recovering its tone, was seeking as it were reunion with its better half. I have read somewhere that an instructive series issued about 1900 by Dent – attractive little books written by excellent hands – was a complete

failure. Ten or twelve years later, a similar series but of larger range was selling like hot cakes. The peak of Meredith's influence falls about the same time and Meredith could be cited as the symbol of continuity recovered, because he was bred of the ferment of the fifties – *Richard Feverel* appeared with *The Origin of Species: Modern Love* is the counterpart of *Ecce Homo* – and he seemed to us in those days to have already some of the timeless quality of the immortals. I was never quite captured. But I certainly felt that, flashing through the murk, a clear note above the affectation, was the same kind of genius that one looked for and recognized in the greatest, old or new. 'No! Vernon, oh! not in this house!' is the way the women of Euripides speak, and to my ear still, 'Kill Claudio', and, 'Sirius, papa' come with the same unexpected inevitable propriety of the classics.

With Meredith at the top of popular recognition, Hardy still living, a prodigious absorption of the classics and the instruction provided by publishers who still professed the old faith – the faith of Knight and Macmillan – in good books, the first decade of this century was a kind of mirage of Victorian culture, a false sun that refused to set and was swallowed up in the cloud of war. I was never able to see anything profoundly original in the satire of Mr. Shaw: it always seemed to me to be the old Victorian tricks played on the old Victorian characters: most of the ideas came from the Philosophic Radicals or Ruskin and most of the jokes from Oxford or *Punch*. Mr. Wells was different. I shared Mr. Mackenzie's experience of hearing him spotted by a Wise Youth of seventeen, on the strength of *When The Sleeper Wakes*,

as the great man of the coming age, and after forty years I must agree with Mr. Mackenzie that the wise youth was right. When foreigners have recited to me their Triad, Shaw, Wells and Galsvozy, I have often replied 'Never mind Shaw and Galsworthy: but read *Kipps*'. Foreigners do not wish to understand us: they only want to gratify the feeling, to which Shaw and Galsworthy minister so comfortably, that they are not after all quite so much our inferiors as in their hearts they know themselves to be. And only an Englishman can apprehend the power, the depth and penetration of Mr. Wells's social diagnostic.

Nothing, I know, is more exasperating than to be told that 'it is all in the *Theatetus*'. No doubt it is – all except the application. It would not be very difficult to argue that Mr. Wells is all in the Utilitarians or all in the Christian Socialists. But the clue I find in his work, what has always interested me profoundly, and what explains, I believe, his power over the last generation, is his quest for the Cortegiano of a world which is no longer indefinite in space and contracted in time, but unimaginably extensive in time and insignificant in space. How suggestive it is that his first books should have been *The Wheels of Chance* and *The Time Machine*! Mr. Wells, it seems to me, has done more than any man to adjust the modern imagination to the materiality of its framework. No doubt it was 'all in' George Stephenson when he made the Rocket run, and 'all in' Boucher de Perthes when he identified the flint implements of the Somme. But it was not articulated, and therefore not apprehended. In his efforts to adumbrate the new Cortegiano, Mr.

Wells seems at times to have in mind something like an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner of the eighteen-thirties, at times something like a muscular Christian of the eighteen-fifties. But with his diagnosis, as a moralist and philosopher, of what needs to be done, my own diagnosis of what went wrong, exactly coincides.

When the New Cortegiano comes will he find culture on the earth? Will he be 'ashamed not to have read Montaigne'? But for one thing, I should mournfully answer no, and that one thing is, that the Cortegiana may come first. In the days of the Interesting Death-bed it was customary to inquire of the Departing 'Are your feet on the Rock?' I have an impression of increasing strength and comfort, that the women have their feet on the rock from which the men are being swept away. Women, they say, are more conservative, more realistic, more dutiful than men. Very likely. Certainly the combination is no bad equipment for the work of continuing, enlarging, consolidating a culture. Men, I feel, will be less and less disposed to take that interest in the subject-matter of tradition, which gives the inducement to observe it further, whether as a work of art, an historic process, or an operation of the human intelligence. Women – but there, in another minute I shall be pointing out that woman is not undeveloped man but diverse. I will therefore say no more than this. For some time past it has seemed to me that the old-fashioned quality of distinction is fading out from the writing of men and becoming more noticeable in the writing of women. I feel it in books, for example, of such different weight and

quality as Miss Sharp's *Fanfare for Tin Trumpets* and Miss Wilson's *Sidney*, in Miss Waddell's *Abelard* and Miss Ramsay's *Peel*, and the only stylist of our day whom the reader instinctively matches with the great artists of the past is a woman. Culture is surely not extinct in the age of *The Common Reader*. Could its future be in safer hands than those which shaped the prose of *The Years*?

LOVE - IN - THE - MIST¹

THE drumfire of modern book-production leaves the reader with little leisure to revise his first impressions. Anyone can see that Mr. Lewis has written a good book: learned, penetrating and eloquent. My own feeling is that he has written a great book, in the tradition of Ker's *Epic and Romance* and Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*. It is by such books that our Universities redress the mischief they did when they turned English literature from a thing you read and enjoyed and talked to your friends about into a subject that you could get marks for. Like Milton, 'I hate a pupil teacher', and, what with examinations, what with textbooks, what with theses, the study of literature tends to be less and less illuminated with that wide delight in all excellence which only the real teacher can kindle. Believe it or not, these eyes have seen a dissertation on the Sources of Macaulay's Essay on Milton with a paragraph on the origin of Fee-Fo-Fum. But there are still books of criticism which make one feel what one imagines a tired and thirsty tree to feel under the rain, and such a book, it seems to me, Mr. Lewis has written. Behind it is all that wide and sensitive understanding of the Middle Ages which is the peculiar possession of Oxford. The spark struck out by the Wartons in the eighteenth century blazed a hundred years later in Morris and Burne-Jones, and then broadened into the steady glow of sound learning, with Stubbs along one path, with Ker

¹ *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, by C. S. Lewis.

and Lane Poole on others. Nor, with Professor Powicke reading Medieval History and Mr. Lewis reading Medieval Literature, does the succession seem likely to fail.

The Allegory of Love was the application of a particular technique to a particular theme. What was Courtly Love? Or, to put it another way, what was it that happened to the human heart about A.D. 1100? I was reading, not long ago, a very remarkable collection of eighteenth-century letters and journals recently discovered in a country house. Their editor will, I am sure, allow me to forestall him to the extent of quoting one passage. The son is making the Grand Tour, and his mother writes to his tutor. When the Passions awake, she says, I should not like him to be in Italy. The Italians have no morality or decency and will make things too easy for him. I would rather he fell in love first with a Woman of Fashion, who liked him well enough to take some trouble over him, and knew how to keep him at a distance. Woman of Fashion, need one remark, does not mean what the newspapers call a Society Lady: Di Vernon herself makes her first appearance on the scene as a Young Lady of Fashion. But here we have two prime elements in Courtly Love: the young knight's feeling for the Domina, and the Domina's attitude to her knight. We have also the clue, I think, to what has puzzled others besides Mr. Lewis, the exact force of Danger in the love-lore of the Middle Ages; that Danger which springs up fiercely when Fair Reception has raised the lover's hopes, or his good opinion of himself, too soon or too high. It is the crushing humiliation which the Woman of Fashion can inflict on familiarity or callowness: it is, literally, *dominiarium*, the way the Domina

has of reminding him what she is—and who he is. Finally, in the contrast between those who make things too easy and those who take trouble, we have, very aptly put, the difference between the Ancient and the Medieval attitude. For the Ancient, heartbroken by Lesbia, there was always Ipsithilla round the corner, and no restraint of religion or social convention required him to abstain from her consolations. The Medieval Servant must be true in body as in soul, or he will merit, and receive, a rebuke as dangerous as one Domina administered to her Knight on the threshold of Paradise.

Guardaci ben: ben sem, ben sem Beatrice.

Observe the Official Plural. We are Beatrice, and We are not pleased.

Thus the love-psychology of the Middle Ages was worked out within a formal and stabilized scheme of relations, arising naturally out of social conditions as experienced by one small class. This is what makes Provençal poetry so terribly dull. Now and again it goes up in the sky with the lark, but for the most part it seems to be occupied, like the man in Molière, in seeing how many ways there are of saying:

Belle Marquise, vos beaux yeux me font mourir
d'amour.

Northern France had, in the psychological allegory, a far better instrument for exploring and articulating the recesses and complexities of the heart. One of the most admirable parts of Mr. Lewis's book is his deduction of the allegory from Latin poetry, where Fear and Pity and

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Wrath and the rest of the sisterhood first begin to take shape as entities, not unlike the entities with which modern psychology works. I once heard a young sportsman reproved for driving on his reaction times and the brake. He retorted that in future he would try to drive on his inferiority complex and the clutch. That gets us very near to the Medieval handling of such conceptions as False-seeming, Ill-mouth, Jealousy, and the rest. If we could go a step farther and say that Reaction Time rebuked by Eld surrendered the wheel to Inferiority Complex, it would get us the whole way. We cannot. But Guillaume de Lorris could, and all the world cried, 'This is what we have been waiting for'.

It is the Romance of the Rose,
In which all the art of love I close.

It exists in three hundred manuscripts. It begot a huge progeny. It was still read in the sixteenth century. When I was a little boy, I looked forward to reading it some day. When I was grown up, I read three hundred lines and decided that I could dispense with the rest, and I fear that any reader who takes it up now will soon be heard murmuring, like Melbourne at *Volpone*, 'I knew it would be dull. But not so Damned Dull.' Those who venture further, under Mr. Lewis's guidance, will soon find themselves asking: 'What will happen if this Courtly Love, rooted in adultery, ever comes to be restated, with all its tactics and observances, in terms of virtuous wooing and honest passion?' The question is central to Mr. Lewis's study, and in the answer the whole history of romantic fiction is involved.

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Mr. Lewis has one of the most precious gifts with which a student of deceased literature can be endowed. He is never bored. His arduous and vigilant industry triumphs over Dullness Incarnate, and the reward of finding good in everything comes to him when he reaches Chaucer:

O wind! O wind! The weather 'ginneth clear!

His chapter on *Troilus and Cressida* is magnificent criticism: so magnificent that, like the slave at a Roman General's triumph, I feel moved to interject a pertness of my own. Mr. Lewis complains of the 'unjustifiably prosaic verbiage' of these lines in the *Parlement of Foules*:

Fowls of ravine
Have chosen first, by pleyn election,
The tercelet of the falcon, to define,
All their sentéce, and, as him list, termine.

He has missed a point which the next two lines disclose:

And to Nature him 'gonnen to present,
And she accepteth him with glad intent.

Chaucer had sat for Kent under Speaker Hungerford, first of the title on record. He is writing of a Parliament of Birds, and, with humorous felicity, he recounts the election of their Speaker, his duties, his presentation to the Sovereign, and the gracious promise to put the best construction on his words, in the full, grave idiom of the law. The next stanzas are the very voice of Mr. Speaker – 'Honourable Members will allow me to finish my sentence' – recalling a straggling debate to the point at issue.

I acknowledge my temerity in differing from Mr. Lewis; but, as I figure, greatly to my surprise, on page 303, as the author of the best of all possible criticisms on Tasso, I feel entitled to swank a little. For that criticism I may indeed claim one merit to which *The Allegory of Love* cannot pretend. It was exactly six words long. I said, 'It is such a good story.' And it is, one of the best ever written.

The same vigilance, animated by a subtle and personal taste for poetry, has incidentally made Mr. Lewis's book a delightful florilegium of forgotten verse. Out of all the post-Chaucerians, the only lines, I suppose, that even a well-equipped reader carries in his head are Hawes's couplet:

For though the day be never so long,
At last the bells ringeth to evensong.

It is not much to bring away from a century and half, and many will be grateful to Mr. Lewis for the blossoms which he has gathered on his arid journey between Chaucer and Spenser. Here is one:

To make good cheer, right sore himself he pained,
And outwardly he fained great gladness:
To sing also by force he was constrained
For no pleasaunce, but very shamefastness:
For the complaint of his most heaviness
Came to his voice alway without request,
Like as the sound of birdes doth express
When they sing loud, in frith or in forest.

But it is towards the greatest of all the allegorists that he is travelling all the time, and his closing

chapter invites – indeed, compels – a revision of many judgments:

Sweet Spenser, moving through his cloudy heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,

has vanished. In his place appears a far more rugged and potent spirit: 'a poet whose chief fault is the uncertainty of his style, who can be as prosaic as Wordsworth, clumsy, unmusical, and flat.' But –

To read him is to grow in mental health. He is the great mediator between the Middle Ages and the modern poets, the man who saved us from the catastrophe of too thorough a Renaissance. In the history of sentiment he is the greatest among the founders of that romantic conception of marriage which was the basis of all our love literature from Shakespeare to Meredith. The whole conception is now being attacked. Feminism in politics, reviving asceticism in religion, animalism in imaginative literature, and, above all, the discoveries of the psycho-analysts, have undermined that monogamic idealism about sex which served us for three centuries. Whether society will gain or lose by the revolution, I need not try to predict; but Spenser ought to gain. What once was platitude should now have for some the brave appeal of a cause nearly lost, and for others the interest of a highly specialized historical phenomenon – the peculiar flower of a peculiar civilization, important whether for good or ill, and well worth our understanding.

There is a great deal to think about there.

THE VICTORIAN NOON-TIME

THE notion of a century we owe, it seems, to religious controvertists of the Reformation time, who found it a convenient framework within which to set the results of their researches into the history of the Early Church. The word gradually found its way into secular speech, but not until the eighteenth century was some way advanced did its inhabitants commonly think of it by number. The nineteenth, which began with a hot debate, renewed in 1900, as to which was its opening year, was from the first very conscious of its standing in the scale of time. Looking back, we may think of it as coming to birth, in literature with *Lyrical Ballads* 1798, in economic science with Malthus's *Principle of Population* of the same year and, politically, with the Union in 1800. If we consider how much of English thought was absorbed, in the next hundred years, by the successive stages of the Romantic movement, by the rights and wrongs of Ireland and the pressure of population on subsistence, we must acknowledge that, for once, history had consented to raise the curtain with a truly dramatic flourish.

But the rapid extinction or slow waning of the earlier lights – Byron, Shelley and Keats; Coleridge, Wordsworth and Scott – sets a bar of twilight across the years about 1830; and the accident of a long reign, beginning shortly afterwards, has given an illusory show of unity to a tract of time in which men and manners changed

more swiftly than at any other epoch of our history. The ferment of the thirties produced a literature which in twenty years had attained almost classic rank. Young men in 1850, reading with the proper avidity of youth, could have found most of their tastes, and most of their curiosities, satisfied by masterpieces published, since their birth, by men who had been pointed out to them in the streets. To watch Mr. Macaulay threading his way through the Piccadilly traffic, book in hand: to see Mr. Dickens running up the steps of the Athenæum: to recognize the Laureate by his cloak and Mr. Carlyle by his shawl, were the peculiar joys of that time. The stone-cutter by the Tiber, chipping out 'Carmen composuit Q. Horatius Flaccus' on the memorial of the Secular Games, must have had the same feeling that he too was living in a great age, peopled with Immortals.

Who were these young men? It is a question always worth asking, because what sixteen to twenty-four is talking about twenty-four to sixty-four will usually write, or think, or do. Those are the charging years. The admirable *Annals of English Literature*¹ which Dr. Ghosh has prepared for the Clarendon Press make such cross-sections easy to draw at any point we may choose. In 1850, Huxley is twenty-five; Bagehot twenty-four; Rossetti and Meredith twenty-two. Christina Rossetti is just twenty; Mark Rutherford a year younger; Lewis Carroll and Leslie Stephen are eighteen; Morris, Acton and Du Maurier are sixteen. Behind them are the school-boys, Swinburne, Morley, Pater; Hardy is just ten; and

¹ *Annals of English Literature*, 1475-1925.

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over them all droops the fading youth of Matthew Arnold, in the full decrepitude of twenty-eight. Those who are fortunate enough to have memories of a Dissolving View will recall the excitement of watching the Norwegian Bride fade away while the Sogne Fjord gradually affirmed itself on the screen. It is so at the mid-century. There is no twilight, but a swift replacement, and, for a while, a bewildering shift of lights and forms.

In *The World's Great Age*,¹ a book written with the generous gusto which its title promises, Mr. Buck selects Matthew Arnold as the representative of the New Humanism, and prefixes to his chapter Arnold's lines:

And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames,
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife.

Bagehot, more tersely and less querulously, spoke of the raggedness of contemporary thought. 'Whatever may be thought', Macaulay wrote in 1859, 'of the theology, the metaphysics, the political theories of our time, boldness and novelty is not what they want.' The truth was that the co-ordinates of the past age, by which the intellectual position of a man could be reckoned, and by which he could set his own opinions, were no longer applicable. In the early thirties he could range himself promptly at the call, as a Reformer, a Radical or a Tory. He was either for the Tractarians or against them: for or against the New Poor Law, and the Repeal of the Corn

¹ *The World's Great Age*, by Philo M. Buck, junr.

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Laws: for the Charter or its determined foe: issues important enough to tax the head and make the heart beat strongly. But from about 1846 the storm of controversy dies rapidly down into a pleasantly exciting breeze, before which the country drives, 'sails filled and streamers waving', past the dangerous reefs of India and the Crimea, into the halcyon weather of Palmerston's old age. Of the years from 1830 to 1850 Mr. Mottram has written: 'There are times when we catch our breath to see the risks we were running.' It is very true. With no less truth could *The Times* in 1861 speak of 'a degree of general contentment to which neither we, nor any other nation we know of, ever attained before'. It was in this season of national euphoria that the mind of the next age was formed: and divided aims, sick hurry, o'ertaxed heads and palsied hearts are hardly now the faults we should specially assign to the decade which was crowned with *The Origin of Species*, which bred or shaped Meredith and Hardy, Huxley, Stephen and John Morley, or disclosed the genius of George Eliot. There is a sparkle, an intoxication in the air; released from its gnawing fear of social subversion, the general mind seems to give itself up to holiday. It is the sparkle of spring: the intoxication of a renewed youth. *Hiems transiit, imber recessit, flores apparuerunt in terra nostra.*

In a curious fragment of spiritual autobiography dating from that time a young man records his relief at escaping, with Kingsley's aid, from the Devil-and-Human-Corruption to God's Earth. The successive prefaces to *Alton Locke*, which appeared in 1850, are documents of the first value for the inner history of the mid-century: for the

change, partly of social circumstance, but more of social feeling, which brought about the 'general contentment' of 1861. *Hypatia* (1853) and *Westward Ho!* (1855) are landmarks not less significant in its spiritual journey. Mr. Buck remarks, with great truth, that Victorian prose seems to go much deeper than Victorian verse. He is writing from the memories of a late Victorian boyhood, when the heartiness of Browning was beginning to sound a little hollow and the Philosophy of Somehow, as set forth by Tennyson, seemed rather thin. No one will set Kingsley by the side of either of them. Of the great Victorian art of word-painting he is indeed a master, but it is not an art of the first consequence in literature. He has become, and will remain, a secondary figure. Yet how much of the late Victorian mind is embryonic in his writings: its Imperialism in *Westward Ho!*; its feminism, its socialism everywhere. The frank and glowing sensuousness of *Hypatia* added a rainbow of new colours to the palette of fiction. 'I have a certain artistic knack of utterance (nothing but a knack),' he said. It was the knack of uttering what the new age wanted to hear. A Royal Commission in 1860 asked an undergraduate what books he read at school. 'Scott, Dickens, Macaulay, Tennyson; Kingsley of course.'

The religious catastrophe of the mid-century was not a sudden or a universal deluge. Whole tracts of society stood above its reach for another thirty years. Mr. Kellett,¹ whose thoughtful and entertaining recollections of cultured Nonconformity in late mid-Victorian times

¹ *As I Remember*, by E. E. Kellett.

admit us into a world not very accessible, but very important, dates it a generation later. But catastrophes are long preparing, and the fifties are such a time of preparation: of deep-seated folding, straining and faulting: old strata and new shifting against each other into fantastic and precarious poises. Francis Newman's *Phases of Faith* and Browning's *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* are of the same year, 1850, the year of *In Memoriam*. *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Hypatia* are of the same year, 1853. But this season of speculative adventure, and not unevenly matched debate, was brief. *The Origin of Species* converted a private, if widely held, doubt into a public issue. 'I don't see', said an old clergyman, 'what there is to make a book about. God created them.' The Darwinian theorem imported an alternative revelation. It created a new framework of reference for ideas. It breached the cosmogony of the old faith, and, with it, the whole metaphysic of Redemption; and through the gap surged wave upon wave of criticism gathering for years in the vast receptacle of German learning. 'Fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.'

Nothing is harder to determine than the exact degree of conviction with which a widespread creed is actually and individually held: of the current Protestantism of 1830 to 1850, as of every other religion, we shall probably be right in saying that it was preached more earnestly than it was practised, and professed more stoutly than it was believed. But a decent, if formal, respect for the confessions and observances of the Churches had for a long while past been imposed by social sanctions.

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Of *religio*, Macaulay, for example, had much. Of religion he had as little as might be expected of a Protestant who had escaped from Clapham; and when he pays his reverence 'to Him that raises up and pulls down nations at His pleasure', we must take the words as an act of respect to English society rather than to Almighty God. When Lyell came forward in defence of *The Origin of Species*, Darwin wrote, with that quiet simplicity which he shared with Faraday: 'Considering his age, his former views, and his position in society, I think his conduct has been heroic.' The phrase is worth pondering. The battle was fought not for the destruction of old beliefs or the affirmation of new hypotheses, but for social recognition of the right to follow the argument wherever it goes. 'Never mind the mistakes of Moses, Sir; where were you last night?' was one of the most formidable arguments in the dialectics of true belief. Wilberforce thought he could crush Huxley with the condescending sarcasm of a platform bully accustomed to the applause of curates. No one ever tried it again. When Pusey set out to organize the forces of the faith against *Essays and Reviews*, even curates turned.

Thus the young men of the fifties grew up in an emancipated world, free, within the limits of a widening decency, to think, to speak, to write, very much as they pleased; and, being young, they availed themselves of the privilege by writing, speaking and thinking a great deal of nonsense. The drastic revision to which Meredith afterwards subjected the text of his early works is the verdict of a cooler time on the high spirits of youth.

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'Twas gladsome, but often
Foolish forsooth;
But gladsome, gladsome!

like the young mischief of the *Saturday Review* and the young roarings of the *Daily Telegraph*, which leapt together into the world in 1855. And what is *Maud* but the Laureate's proof that he, too, was abreast of the times? There is in Tennyson's literary character a well-marked strain of journalistic adaptability. From the rick-burners of 1830 to the Krakatoa sunsets of 1883, all was copy that came to his muse. In *Maud*, the hero learns 'to feel with his native land'; and Tennyson had learnt to feel about Company Promoting and Industrial Insurance as the Christian Socialists felt: about the Northern Anarch and John Bright as a warlike electorate felt.

Mr. Buck says, with reason, of the age which Arnold found 'not ungrand, not unmoving, but unpoetical', that seldom in any age of the world's history were there so many poets. But how many of them, and how much even in the best of them, must we silence to hear the true Muse singing.

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
Till over down and over dale
All night the shining vapour sail
And pass the silent-lighted town,
The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
And catch at every mountain head,
And o'er the friths that branch and spread
Their sleeping silver thro' the hills.

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When, from far Parnassus' side,
Young Apollo, all the pride
Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,
To the Phrygian highlands came;
Where the long green reed-beds sway
In the rippled waters grey
Of that solitary lake
Where Macander's springs are born;
Whence the ridged pinewooded roots
Of Messogis westward break,
Mounting westward, high and higher.
There was held the famous strife;
There the Phrygian brought his flutes,
And Apollo brought his lyre.

Golden head by golden head,
They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory,
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their nest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

That is how the poetry of the fifties comes back to the
memory best: in fragments, like the Greek lyric, and,

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whenever it can forget its ethical or doctrinal formalities, with not a little of the fresh, instinctive perfection of Greek lyric. In the urbane and fluid prose of the time – the prose, for example of Thackeray and Froude in contrast with that of Dickens and Macaulay – the same clear note is heard. The truculent, the pompous, the gushing are no longer the mode; and if, out of the whole record of our public oratory, we had to choose one passage to show what the Attic manner was, what could it be but this?

I met him a short time before he went out, at Mr. Westerton's the bookseller, near Hyde Park Corner. I asked him whether he was going out. He answered, he was afraid he was; not afraid in the sense of personal fear – he knew not that; but he said, with a look and a tone I shall never forget: 'It is no light matter for a man who has a wife and five little children.' The stormy Euxine is his grave; his wife is a widow, his children fatherless.

Politically, the halcyon days ended in an unseemly shuffle out of Schleswig-Holstein under the grim, contemptuous eyes of Bismarck. 'Those who were young', Green wrote, 'in the weary days of Palmerstonian rule will remember the disgust at purely political life which was produced by the bureaucratic inaction of the time.' The tacit agreement to leave things as they were so long as the old man lived imposed a general silence, which burst into a deafening volubility as soon as the old man was laid to his rest. But, both in literature and in manners, the stirring and good-humoured fifties had

left a grace and brightness behind them across which the Early Victorian time appeared as a season of constriction, heaviness and gloom. Let anyone make the experiment of reading in succession a good popular novel of the forties and seventies – say, Mrs. Gore's *Cecil a Coxcomb* and Black's *Madcap Violet*, where, incidentally, he will encounter Swinburne's favourite heroine – and gauge for himself the change in the social atmosphere. The use of fictional sources for social history is a practice to be followed, doubtless, with caution. But on one point their evidence is almost infallible. They show us what types were biologically attractive to a particular generation, and by natural law those types will be ascendant in the evolution of the next. They are documents for the *Origin of Social Species* by Sexual Selection.

Malthus had glimpses, which Darwin enlarged into a steady view, of evolution as a cosmic process, 'bringing a mind out of the clod'. Reduced to a plan of society, the Malthusian doctrine seemed to have established self-aggrandizement and self-restraint as the balancing forces behind all progress. Regarded as a scheme of creation, does the Darwinian hypothesis establish competition as heaven's first law, or does it point to the emergence of a moral order above itself? Evolving – yes, but evolving what? Must we look forward to a progressive segregation of finer types, a biological aristocracy; and will the political democracy ever allow it to come into existence? Or to a general raising of society; and will that democracy possess either the brain or the resolution for the task? May we trust the deep and irresistible appetences and recoils of instinct, which forbid Clara to

mate with Willoughby and carry her as swiftly and directly to Vernon as Nature bore Haidée into the arms of Juan? But consider, then, what impoverished, constrained, conventional material our social discipline has made for Nature to work upon. Vast are the powers of Evolution to create, but vast, too, are the ages which it needs to create in; and, if it cannot make a better individual without a better ambient, neither can it make a better society without better components. We see the new co-ordinates drawing, and the Late Victorian intelligence aligning itself between self-realization and self-sacrifice, the improvement of the individual or the race, self-culture or self-subordination to the welfare of some immediate or remote society: or tracing that strange diagonal which Morris was to follow from *The Earthly Paradise* to Trafalgar Square.

The *Annals of English Literature* gives us a watershed from which to survey two landscapes.

1852 Thomas Moore died.

George Moore born.

Thomas Moore lived long enough to read Macaulay's Third Chapter and its exultant close:

We too shall, in our turn, be outstripped, and in our turn be envied. It may well be, in the twentieth century, that the peasant of Dorsetshire may think himself miserably paid with twenty shillings a week; that the carpenter at Greenwich may receive ten shillings a day; that labouring men may be as little used to dine without meat as they now are to eat rye

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bread; that sanitary police and medical discoveries may have added several more years to the average length of human life; that numerous comforts and luxuries which are now unknown, or confined to a few, may be within the reach of every diligent and thrifty working man. And yet it may then be the mode to assert that the increase of wealth and the progress of science have benefited the few at the expense of the many, and to talk of the reign of Queen Victoria as the time when England was truly merry England, when all classes were bound together by brotherly sympathy, when the richer did not grind the faces of the poor, and when the poor did not envy the splendour of the rich.

This is the confident and solid humanism of the past, with its near objectives and measured advance: in that faith the earlier Victorians went out to win for their children the triumphant peace of the mid-century.

George Moore lived long enough to read, if he could have borne to read it, Hardy's summing of the whole matter:

Pain to all upon earth, tongued or dumb, shall be kept down to a minimum by loving kindness, operating through scientific knowledge, and actuated by the modicum of free will conjecturally possessed by organic life when the mighty necessitating forces – unconscious or other – that have ‘the balancings of the clouds’ happen to be in equilibrium, which may or may not be often.

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The rustic, Cyclopean, phrasing is all Hardy. But the thought is the thought of one who had grown to manhood in the rich golden noon of nineteenth-century England and, through a long afternoon, had watched the horizon receding as the light faded and the colours paled.

• M A G I C A N D M U D L A R K S •

Och, Dublin city there's no doubtin'

Bates every city upon the say:

'Tis there you'll hear O'Connell spouting,

And Lady Morgan making tay.

It is the capital of the finest nation

Wid charming pisantry on a fruitful sod,

Fighting like divils for conciliation,

And hating each other for the love of God.

WHEN I read or hear young enthusiasts denouncing Nationalism with a fervour which sometimes makes me feel like Mr. Dick at the shorthand parties, I often wonder whether they have any idea what picture the word calls up in the minds of an older generation. One of my very earliest recollections is of being induced, with difficulty, to enter a railway carriage in which two Highlanders were already seated. I supposed that they were Irishmen, and would slay me forthwith. About the same time, I planted a small tree and defied Mr. Gladstone, *in absentia*, to cut it down if he dared. A little later I was warned not to repeat a pantomime joke, wholly unintelligible to me, about Parnell and a fire-escape. Thereafter, Ireland ebbed out of the conversation of the elders. I did, indeed, get up early in 1893 to see by what majority the Lords had thrown out the Home Rule Bill. But it was only curiosity, not apprehension. Like

¹ *Dramatis Personae*, by W. B. Yeats.

Johnson's butcher, whose heart bled for his country, I had in truth no uneasy sensation: and, like his Sovereign, her young subject had perfect confidence in Lord Salisbury.

While the Queen and I, with his stout assistance, were defending the Union against its enemies within and without, Mr. Yeats was writing *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Celtic Twilight*. The shrinkage of native genius, some failure or distraction of native energy, and the waning of the older, austerer impulses – Protestantism, Self-Improvement, Respectability – had left us open to fresh stimulation from abroad. Tolstoi and Ibsen were coming in; French Naturalism and Flaubert had set new standards of accomplishment for novelists. There was room, and an audience, for a Celtic movement. Indeed, as early as 1867, the hounds of spring were on winter's traces, for it was in that year that Matthew Arnold pointed to a running stream, close at hand, from which the over-laboured fields of English poetry could be refreshed. He had spoken of the Celtic magic. After sixty years one may wish that he had not. But in its day the observation was as fine as it was useful. A critic cannot serve the world better than by identifying some element, of which, no doubt, it was always aware, but of which it had never been led to form a clear and distinct perception.

When W. P. Ker was asked to define a Ballad, he was fond of replying: 'In spite of Socrates and his logic, it is the *Milldams of Binnorie*, and *Sir Patrick Spens*, and things of that sort.' And if I wanted to define the magical in poetry, I should have to say: 'It is

vobis parta quies; nullum maris aequor arandum:
and.

Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh,

and things of that sort', things where a quite definite observation is made to convey a quite unlimited suggestion. This magic, as I conceive it, has its home on the watershed between the classic and romantic landscapes, and commands them both: just as the Matter of Britain, our best example of the magical on the grand scale, stands on the watershed between the Catholic, and some pre-Christian, landscape, to us no longer visible. I am getting on to dangerous ground. But magic, though it may appear anywhere and at any time; though it is, I think, as frequent in the Greek, as in the poetry of the Peninsula and our own, does seem to haunt more particularly the paths of the Celtic muse, in Wales and Ireland, and the Highlands, and the fringes of their influence.

For mony a place stands in hard case
Where blithe folk kenned nae sorrow:
With Haigs that bide on Bemersyde
And Scotts that dwelt in Yarrow.

There is something there, I think, outside the range of our native balladry. And here is the thing itself:

Twilight, a timid fawn, went glimmering by,
And night, the dark-blue hunter, followed fast:
Ceaseless pursuit and flight were in the sky,
But the long chase had ceased for us at last.

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We watched together while the driven fawn
Hid in the golden thicket of the day.
We, from whose hearts pursuit and flight were gone,
Knew, on the hunter's breast her refuge lay.

We needed that note in our last Victorian and Edwardian time, and we may be grateful to the singers who found it for us.

To determine the exact relation of this magic with other elements in the Celtic make-up is not so easy. And, except in Germany, where they still believe in Aryans, modern knowledge is less confident in its handling of these racial concepts. Personally, I distrust them all, and the notion I prefer to use is that of an Objective Mind, which is created by historical circumstances, and controls the doing and the thinking of the individual, very much as our mother-tongue controls our saying. That there is, quite definably, such a thing as an Irish mind, no one, I believe, would deny; and if we had grasped this truth in the nineteenth century, though there would have remained Irish Questions innumerable, it seems to me quite likely that the Irish Question would never have arisen. Burke had the Irish mind, as well as the Irish voice – I should very much like to hear some of his great passages declaimed by an Irish speaker – and the wrong side of Burke, his extravagance, his violence, his monomaniac obstinacy, is what the Englishman recognizes in Irish history from the Union onwards. Mr. Gladstone once spoke of an 'inveterate sentiment of hostility flavoured with contempt' as the basis of the English tradition with regard to Ireland.

Exasperation is, I think, a better word. If a mischievous child hides the key of your desk and, with the invincible resolution of childhood, refuses to say where it is, what are you to do? You may lament that you have not given the child a better education. You may resolve to be wiser in the future. You may try Emancipation, Coercion, Land Purchase, Resolute Government, new Rules of Procedure, all by turns. But time is passing, and where is that key?

There, now. I was thinking of Mr. Yeats and the Countess Cathleen, and already I have run off on to the Devon Commission and Buckshot Forster and the rights and wrongs of Mitchelstown and Maamtrasna. But one cannot help it. The Irish movement, in which Mr. Yeats has risen to an acknowledged and merited primacy, is inextricably literary and political at once. Of Lady Gregory he writes: 'Born in 1852, she had passed her formative years in comparative peace, Fenianism a far-off threat; and her marriage in her twenty-seventh year, visits to Ceylon, India, London, Rome, set her beyond the reach of the bitter struggle between landlord and tenant of the late seventies and early eighties. She knew Ireland always in its permanent relationships'; which were, I suppose, in the last analysis, the relations between the Catholic and his Church, between the native gentry and their tribesmen, and, under all, between the people and the land. On these, conquest had imposed a system of false, unnatural relationships: a Protestant establishment, Ricardian economics, and the manorial English use of landlord and tenant. 'A starving people, an alien church, and an absentee aristocracy, that is the Irish

Question.' Whether anything could have saved the Irish, before the great depopulation, from starving, I am not so sure; and, being one of those aliens, I may have misconceived the process of Irish history when I read it as an effort to throw off the superimposed, and return to the permanent, relations. But I do not think I have. The three Fs, the Celtic Twilight, De-Anglicization, Hyde, Plunkett, the Abbey Theatre, that is what it all comes to. Whether, indeed, these relations be really permanent, whether they are not already becoming a part of the Celtic mirage, that is another question for another age to answer.

Mr. Yeats describes a dinner given to himself and Edward Martyn:

Towards the end of the evening, when everybody was more or less drunk, O'Grady spoke. He was very drunk. He stood between two tables, touching one or the other for support, and said, in a low, penetrating voice, 'We have now a literary movement; it is not very important. It will be followed by a political movement; that will not be very important. Then must come a military movement; that will be important indeed.' Tyrrell, Professor of Greek in Trinity College, a Unionist, but very drunk, ['but' is good] led the applause. Then O'Grady described the Boy Scout Act, which had just passed, urged the landlords of Ireland to avail themselves of that Act and drill the sons of their tenants – 'paying but little attention to the age limit' – then, pointing to where he supposed England to be, they must bid them 'march to the

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conquest of that decadent nation'. Tyrrell, understanding nothing but the sweetness of that voice, the nobility of that gesture, continued to lead the applause.

How well that is observed! How freshly the sentences fall on an ear tired out by the Ribbon Development of George Moore's prose! And am I wrong in hearing in it the accent of another Irish voice, the voice of Swift getting lovingly to work on John Partridge? But O'Grady was right. The military movement came, and Mr. Yeats has written of that, too:

'O words are lightly spoken,'

Said Pearse to Connolly:

'Maybe a breath of politic words

Has withered our Rose Tree:

Or maybe but a wind that blows,

Across the bitter sea.'

'It needs to be but watered,'

James Connolly replied,

'To make the green come out again

And spread on every side,

And shake the blossoms from the bud

To be the garden's pride.'

'But where can we draw water?'

Said Pearse to Connolly,

'When all the wells are parched away?

O plain as plain can be

There's nothing but our own red blood

Can make a right Rose Tree.'

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That was written from a great height. But – how long can one read, in Irish literature or politics, without feeling a surge of the old exasperation, over some preposterous folly or preposterous falsehood, some casuistry or some make-believe, about the English or the Celts or the leprechauns or the annuities; murders that are not assassinations and assassinations that are not murders; over the giggling, gloating cruelty of cattle-maimers and George Moore, or the solemn buffoonery of the Signatories, laboriously mis-spelling their English names in characters learnt from a copybook, and issuing English Translations of proceedings conducted in the only language they understood?

• FORTY YEARS OF VERSE ¹

I DOUBT if any large community – small and compact societies, like Athens, or the Court-and-Temple circle of Elizabethan London, are on a different footing – has ever been so thoroughly permeated with poetry as England between say, the appearance of *Childe Harold* and the death of Tennyson. The apparatus of diffusion was never more efficient, and the school reader, the Church social, the penny reading, the recitation domestic or scholastic, the sermon, the calendar, and the birthday book, operated with a persistency and an intimacy for which a weekly performance on the wireless furnishes a very poor substitute. Add to this, that the greater part of the population, and practically the whole of the literate population, was from early childhood brought up to render verse in tunes universally known, thus getting, as I suppose, the kind of training in rhythmical form which the Greek got from taking part in, or looking on at, ritual dances. Poetry, in a way, was everybody's business; the poets worked on a communal basis and within a communal framework; and the process of history in the period covered by Mr. Yeats's anthology has been, first that the communal basis was lost, and second, that the communal framework was burst.

Our nineteenth-century poetry had involved itself in much which was poetically irrelevant, in messages and lessons, in discourses on the relations of Science and

¹ *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, edited by W. B. Yeats.

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Religion and the evidence for Personal Immortality. The French had had much the same trouble, though the mischief there was less the Pulpit than the Platform, rant rather than cant: and, historically, the Parnassian movement with them and what may most conveniently be called Paterism with us, were national facets of a single tendency. We both needed a period of *recueillement*, occupied in refining and perfecting our literary practice, which, with us, meant disengaging and cultivating certain modes, very richly and abundantly present in our past and even recent poetry, but always tending to be obscured or silenced by moral and social preoccupations with the subject, the substance, the ethical effect: modes, for example, which are represented for us in Browning by

Such balsam falls
Down seaside mountain pedestals,
From treetops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island gain,

which might be Leconte de Lisle; and are not represented by

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier saints who row on row,
Burn upward each, to his point of bliss,

which might equally well be Victor Hugo.

If I wanted a password to this Parnassian period of ours, I think I should choose Precision, remembering, of

course, that there is a Romantic, a Classic, and a Naturalistic precision; and it is therefore characteristic that among its most distinguished representatives should have been men of refined and scholarly accomplishment: Bridges, Housman, Lionel Johnson, Mr. Binyon. Of course there are sub-divisions, the least charitable being into the Drunk and Sober, or the Puritans and the Café Royalists, the Puritans in their turn being listed as the Classicists and the Folk Lorists, and the followers of the Fairy Way. As I look back, it seems to me now to have been a time of preparation for something which never came; a tuning of instruments for no performance; a waveless pool with no outlet. To my ear much of that poetry has, along with the Caroline charm, the Caroline insignificance: I feel that, had he been living then, Habington would have cut a very good figure in Mr. Yeats's anthology. One says: this can't go on, something must happen, or the thing will stop. It has merit, but does it matter? And when poetry starts this question, it means, as I have put it, that it has got detached from its communal basis. In the nineteenth century we took it for granted that a great nation ought to have fine poetry, as it ought to have fine public buildings and fine pictures. I am not sure it was good for Tennyson or his poetry that the public should stalk him with telescopes to see him plucking flowers out of crannied walls. But I am quite sure it was good for the public, and in this later period the public interest in poetry – apart from an occasional commotion like that provoked by *The Everlasting Mercy* – died away. One bold man, having written a poem, did indeed hire the Albert Hall and throw

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it on the screen, like the hymns at a Missionary Meeting: there was a band also. But I doubt if many people under forty – or over – could now say what that poem was.

The best moralists teach us that if you go out to hunt the hare you will probably find pleasure; if you go out to hunt pleasure, you certainly will not. It is so with poetry. Language is used for so many purposes besides, that to make the creation of beauty in words your sole aim involves so much exclusion and rejection that only a very vigorous poetic genius can save the result from mere prettiness and mere tuniness. Mr. Yeats austere-ly pronounces against the facility and too soft simplicity of his own early work, and this judgment I suppose might be taken as sanctioning the exclusion of *Innisfree*, and

When you are old and gray,

and A. E.'s *Refuge*. But this same excess of austerity has led to the rejection of much which is really necessary to the understanding of our Parnassian phase. Rupert Brooke has only one piece, a poor one: Edward Thomas one; Flecker comes off rather better, but neither *Yasmin* nor *Saadabad* nor the *Epithalamium* is deemed worthy to enter; and the selection from Housman might well make a stranger wonder what all the fuss had been about. Of course, no one's anthology will ever quite satisfy anyone else, but I cannot think that justice is done to the last age if Bridges's *Elegy on a Lady* is omitted; and though Mr. Yeats, I am sure, is far too good a poet to be blinded by a temporary unfashionableness, what else can have led to the rejection of *Grantchester*, *Dining Room Tea*, *The Fish*, and *Tiare Tahiti*?

This Parnassian corrective of Victorian moralism itself needed a corrective, an injection of something tonic and astringent. The widespread interest in Donne towards the beginning of this century is symptomatic: it is one of the illusions of our age that Donne was invented by Mr. Eliot. As Mr. C. S. Lewis has recently pointed out, in his *Allegory of Love*, what may be called our poetic attitude to the world was until recently in the main Spenserian, and to Spenser, Donne in his intellectualism and rejection of the romantic lure is the obvious antithesis. But not more obvious than Hardy. Here is exactly the harshness and rootiness, the integrity and objectivity that our poetry needed. I can just remember the merriment of the elders when he turned from prose to poetry. 'Nature said to Mr. Hardy, "You shall not be a poet"'. Mr. Hardy said, "I will".' But the merriment soon gave way, not indeed to any popular acclaim – I doubt if he was ever widely read – not to any such admiration as excites to discipleship, but to an attentive respect which may be the earnest of fame and following to come. Mr. Yeats refuses him 'technical accomplishment'. You may of course dislike the peculiar idiom which Hardy created for himself, but surely no one could ascribe its wintry, knotted stubbornness to any artistic incompetence, and in the other matter of music as contrasted with diction, I can only record my own belief that Hardy is one of the greatest metrists who have ever handled our language. But

Black'on frowns east on Maidon,
And westward to the sea,

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and Hardy always' seems to me to stand between two worlds, with few illusions about the one, few hopes for the other, much pity for both, and if, as after all is likely enough, the pains of our present time prove to be only the *aegri somnia* of an overdriven adolescence, he may some day be discerned as the one poet whose voice had power to carry from that old world to this new.

But altogether, I have the feeling that in his earnest endeavour to overtake the revolution, Mr. Yeats is unduly ready to accept its valuations: if a belief in the 'culture and erudition' of Mr. Pound is to be a condition of survival in the classless democracy, then it's a firing party for me, because I shall persist in regarding the *Cantos* as merely an acute case of that malady from which St. Paul delivered the father of Publius, the chief man of the island. Of Miss Sitwell Mr. Yeats speaks excellently – it is the best piece of criticism in his Introduction – but he does not give her poetry a fair chance when he omits so exquisite and personal a poem as *The Little Ghost That Died for Love*. Nor is any part of Mr. Osbert Sitwell's *England Reclaimed* to be found, and it is, I am afraid, characteristic of Mr. Yeats's standpoint and mine that I looked at once for Mr. Day Lewis's

Do not expect again a phoenix hour

and Mr. Spender's

I think continually

which Mr. Yeats was determined that I should not find. Are they perhaps too beautiful? The word, I know, has come to have a dreadful meaning. But I am not a young

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Communist: Lettres for Lettres, I prefer Belles to Laides: and if our latest time has produced anything more beautiful than those two pieces, it is certainly not here, nor, with the kindest assistance from younger eyes, have I been able to find it elsewhere. .

At the same time I both envy and admire the ease and confidence with which Mr. Yeats gets into relations with the moderns. He goes ashore on the Waste Land, traffics with the natives, and comes away without any doubts as to the genuineness either of the curios or the change they give him for his money. That is what I cannot do. Some of the pieces are all right: some of the change rings like silver. But I have an obstinate suspicion all the time that many of the curios will go bad on me, and much of the currency be swiftly devaluated to nil. What are these strange noises they exchange with one another? Why do they insist on dealing with me in a darkened shop? Of course, Mr. Yeats was a standard-bearer in a literary movement which grew into a political catastrophe: I am a traditionalist and believe that catastrophes are a proof of the selfishness of those who provoke them and the stupidity of those who allow them to happen. But in poetry I have at least a very long tradition behind me, because, to me, poetry, which I should never try to define, is the way of writing which can be identified as common to Aeschylus and Catullus, Ronsard and Goethe; and, confronted with something which professes to be poetry of a new kind, I am not comfortable till I have fitted it into its genealogical tree and caught the family likeness. In fact, I very much doubt whether there is such a thing as new and

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old in poetry; only, 'as it were, a travelling illumination passing from one area to another of a continuous and indivisible surface, bringing out what a particular age wants to see; and the area upon which many of our latest poets play their beam is one that I cannot find in any map.

I am sure it is not any novelty or harshness of phrasing that baffles me, though, to be quite honest, I do think that much of the poetic diction of the day is illiterate fudge. My puzzle is to see what the poets are after. Flecker said in that introduction to *The Golden Journey* which is the best manifesto of our Parnassian time: 'the poet's business is not to save man's soul, but to make it worth saving.' Mr. Auden and Mr. Freeman have been restating the doctrine for to-day. That to increase our sensibility to 'the difference between the better and worse over the whole range of life and circumstance' has been, historically, one of the main functions of poetry, to me admits of little doubt: and as we now know that those differences go much deeper into our organic and unconscious life than former times supposed, it follows that poetry will have to go much deeper to find them. And if the divers seem to gasp and splutter more than they need, perhaps it is only for want of practice. But are they evolving a standard, communicable form in which to report their observations? Because this is what one means when one speaks of the poetry of a nation or an age, and, if it is lacking, then I do not see how poetry can be other than the merest coterie-stuff, for private, and limited, circulation. And that will do our souls no good.

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To clear the gap, I have to take a long run. An attentive ear might have noticed sounds of cracking thirty or forty years ago. Browning had set the example of swift, point-to-point, image-to-image diction, and I was interested to find Mr. Day Lewis, in his *Hope for Poetry*, unconsciously repeating of Hopkins what Swinburne said of Browning, sixty years ago, in an essay on Chapman. If you remember that Hopkins was twenty when *Dramatis Personae* appeared, and that *The Ring and the Book* came out four years later, it is not so difficult to see his line of derivation. Starting from this point, he argued himself into certain advanced notions of poetic phrasing and never had time or leisure to practise himself back into English. 'Had he lived', Mr. Charles Williams has said, 'those tricks might have seemed to us no more than the incidental excitements of developing genius. Since he did not live, they will probably always occupy a disproportionate part of the attention given to him,' and exercise, one must add, a disproportionate influence. The result is that much subsequent verse has run into the Hopkins siding and got stuck there, while the main line is bare of traffic.

Meanwhile, Bridges, remaining classical in his diction, was arguing himself in turn into the conviction that because now and then, for a very special purpose, Milton might write an unmelodic line, therefore he, Bridges, might write as many as he chose. The result was a small but exquisite set of lyrics, and *The Testament of Beauty*, which seems to be the favourite poem of those who read no others, and which sounds as if Bentley, after correcting the style of *Paradise Lost*, had gone on to transpose the

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Excursion into Plautine iambs. Little is heard now of the voluminous verse of Doughty. But it, too, in diction and cadence, is symptomatic of the slipping and fracturing that was going on below the surface of Parnassus.

Regarded solely as experiments, or as corrections of prettiness and tuniness, these movements were serviceable. But the age was poetically languid, and largely, I think, as a result of too much experimenting, too much fiddling with the keys, we began to lose our sense of those elements in poetry which correspond, in painting, to tonal harmony and calligraphic line, and which in both arts owe their significance, their absolute and dominant significance, to the construction of the human frame and its senses. This loss, this weakening, was aggravated by a sudden addiction to alien styles, to *vers libre* and translations from foreign languages or imitations of foreign modes; and all these things, coming together, operated, if I may borrow an elegance from the Council for International Peace, to undermine the verse mentality.

I write tentatively and I may clear my way by a preliminary admission. By incorporating in our classical literature a translation in balanced prose-cola – necessarily balanced because it was following the parallelisms of Hebrew verse – we created for ourselves a mixed mode which we are certainly entitled to use for appropriate purposes.

Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty;
They shall behold a land of far distances.

is a very fine thing in its kind. But that kind is obviously

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not verse, and one has only to think of it employed in continuous exposition or narrative to realize that it would be quite unserviceable as prose. Still, there it is, for use when it is needed. †

But having made this allowance, I appeal to the whole literary experience of Europe, ancient and modern, to support me in maintaining the fundamental distinction between stated and emergent rhythm: fundamental, because it determines the attitude of the reader or hearer to the performance, and so, alone, enables him to hear or read the poets as poets. Given two pieces which I know well enough to take the meaning for granted, in verse my interest is to observe the manipulation of a rhythm which is agreed upon between the poet and myself and all other speakers of the language, and which therefore is in part my contribution, and theirs, to the performance. With prose, my interest is to follow the movements of a voice over which I have no control. Now, it is universally admitted that prose which slips into stated rhythms is bad. By analogy it is to be inferred that verse will be bad if it is written in the emergent rhythms of the other species. This, I believe, is what the Greeks intended when they said that prose has shape and verse has measure. In verse you ought to know, within admitted limits, what is coming next: in prose you ought not. The orator does not need your physical co-operation: the poet does. This is what I mean by the communal framework. The poet is the choregus of a vocal dance, the chief figures and movements in which are known in advance to the audience. He says, 'It goes like this,' and you all join in. And my trouble is that I do

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not know, with much modern verse, how it is meant to go. I cannot join the dance.

I can bring the debate to an issue by a simple question, and if this essay happens to fall into the hands of Mr. Day Lewis, I should deem it both a courtesy and a kindness if he would answer it. Arterial roads seem to have a high symbolic value in modern poetry, just as the new railways had for Tennyson, a hundred years ago:

Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing
grooves of change;

an excellent metre, which Mr. Auden wields effectively in a poem which might be called *Locksley Hall Sixty Years Too Late*. But Mr. Auden, in handling the theme, writes thus:

Escaping humming down arterial roads
and I know where I am. Mr. Day Lewis puts it otherwise —

Down arterial roads riding in April,
which does not scan, while he might, so far as I can see,
just as well have written

Riding in April down arterial roads,
which does. Why does he write prose when he might
write verse?

I must define my terms. I say that a line scans when, without any straining of the words or melody, it can be sung to an easy and popular tune. Such tunes capture

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and record the instinctive rhythmical habits of a language. With the usual allowance for occasional virtuositities and experiments, every line of English verse from the Elizabethan settlement of our poetry until quite recent times, will be found to conform to this test; and

Dibdin does more than Hopkins can
To teach the young idea to scan.

How does this go?

Riding in April down arterial roads.

Like

Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Or this?

Sweet in her green dell the flower of beauty
slumbers.

Like

Oranges and lemons, say the bells of St. Clement's.

Or this?

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay.

To speak in crosswords, the clue is *Biscay*. And this?

Down arterial roads riding in April.

Well, I cannot imagine. But I cannot dismiss it as an occasional virtuosity or experiment because a great part of modern verse is written in what I must regard as an

unmetrical mode, only typographically distinguishable from prose.

✓ If I am right, then there has been in our day not a development but a catastrophe, a gash at the root of our poetry, to which I can recall no exact parallel in literary history, and that a poetry with traditions so rich and tenacious as ours should surrender at sight to the first man who thought of translating French *vers libre* into broken-down Elizabethan stage verse seems to me, if it turns out to be true, to be one of the oddest things on record. Yet this I understand is the claim made for Mr. Eliot, the Sinon by whose wiles the Wooden Horse was received into the fortress.

It is common, too, I find, to look on Hopkins as the chief legislator of the new mode. For Hopkins as a poet I have the greatest admiration, but his theories on metre seem to me to be as demonstrably wrong as those of any speculator who has ever led a multitude into the wilderness to perish. Unfortunately, they have been used as a justification for the cacophonies which naturally result when the metrically deaf write verse, and the metrically deaf are a very large class. There are two degrees of the affliction. In advanced cases the sufferer, like Johnson's friend, who thought that if a line had ten syllables it was verse —

Put your knife and your fork across your plate —

cannot hear the fundamental patterns of rhythm: I have known a schoolboy who could not, except by ticking off the syllables, tell a hexameter from a pentameter. Far more frequent is the inability to hold the pattern and

the counterpoint in the ear together. I am not sure, having no musical knowledge, that I am using the word in its strict and technical sense, but I am using it as Hopkins did. To take the first instance that comes to mind, in

Right so Criseide, whan hir drede stente
Opened hir herte, and tolde him hir intende,

the first is in the pure pattern, the second is counterpointed; and the fundamental, the guiding principle in English poetry, has always been: you must counterpoint to avoid monotony, but you must not silence the pattern. You can only work within limits, and if you go beyond them the result is prose. It is no use saying, like the Pharisees: 'It is Corban, a sprung rhythm': it will not be verse.

What fixes these limits is, ultimately, the physique of a language. Nothing else imposes them, nothing else can change them: the most that any poet can do is to observe them, and to discover fresh possibilities of counterpointing within them. Verse is the most pleasant mode of utterance, in the Aristotelian sense of pleasure as an 'unimpeded activity'; and the least impeded way of uttering English is so to arrange the sounds that we are not called upon to make two successive discharges of vocal energy, or to inhibit that energy over too long a sequence of unstressed syllables. With the reservation I have already made for trickwork and trial pieces, every English poet, until recently, has conformed to this physique thus formalized, following the same instinct that makes us say *Búckland Mónachórum* but *Zeál Monáchorum*.

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It was by ignoring these physical facts that Hopkins went so wildly astray. I quote from the preface of the 1933 edition, and down to page 3 all is well, or reasonably well, because what he means by saying that the choruses of *Samson Agonistes* are written throughout in counterpointed rhythm I cannot conceive. Taken line by line, they are counterpointed or not according to the judgment of the poet.

Universally crowned with highest praises
is counterpointed to the verge of what is permissible, and, to my ear, can only be saved by a trick which our language keeps up its sleeve, of using, in emergencies, ~~pitch~~ as a surrogate for stress.

Without reprieve, adjudged to death
For want of well pronouncing shibboleth

are lines as plain as will be found in the language. But we have not come to the end. Hopkins's statement that the choruses of *Samson* are counterpointed is expanded by Mr. Yeats (Introduction, p. xxix) into the assertion that they are in sprung verse. Combining this with Hopkins's final remarks on Sprung Rhythm (pp. 5, 6) we arrive at the truly edifying conclusion that

Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns:
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Borne witness gloriously: whence Gaza mourns
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent,

where the metre is kept evenly pulsating, with barely a flicker, line after line – a ground tone as it were to the verbal orchestration at *gloriously* and *uncontrollable* – is rather like:

- (i) prose;
- (ii) nursery rhymes and weather saws;
- (iii) Greek and Latin lyric;
- (iv) Piers Plowman.

An error must have crept in.

I am sorry to speak harshly of one whom I honour so greatly, but Hopkins was, as Ruskin said of Reynolds, 'born to teach all truth by his practice and all error by his doctrine', and the root of that error lay in an ignorance of his subject so profound that he was not aware there was anything to know. On this side, his influence has been as pernicious as it has been potent, and unless the rising generation has enough poetic learning to see where it is taking them, and enough poetic vigour to throw it off, I am afraid the next and last *Oxford Book of English Verse* will bear as its sub-title, 'Or, the End of an Old Song'.

I pray to God, and Saint Oswald,
To bring the sheep safe back to fold.

On this pious if lugubrious note I must have ended, were it not for one poet of our days, in whose work I do see the promise of a modern verse which shall be verse as well as modern. I am prepared to admit that the impact of metrical modernism has been so vigorous and so well-timed that it will be difficult for a poet henceforth to find himself quite at his ease within the forms transmitted

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to us by our ancestors. But are there any others available? It is an old and well-worked literature, and it might be supposed that all the possibilities had been explored. But, as I have suggested above, there is a mode with which we are familiar, and in which we can all join – the cola balanced about a central pause. Conceive now a poet who needs a full line; who, being a poet, cannot sing unless he knows his chorus are following him; and, being modern, cannot fit himself into even the stateliest measures of the past. What will he do? One need not ask, because he has done it: he has written the *Canons of Giant Art*.

ON PLEASURE¹

'THERE is a pleasure in extracting the potato from its native element, if I may so express myself, to which the rich and powerful must be for ever strangers.' Quoting from memory, I have probably furnished many readers already with the refined and superior pleasure of remarking that I have quoted wrong. That makes two. A third has already been implicitly indicated: the pleasure of detecting the omissions in an anthology. Like the mayor, who undertook to tread the narrow path between partiality and impartiality, the anthologist must not be too original, or his readers' self-respect will be offended by the number of things they do not know; and not too traditional, or they will want their money back. Mr. Armstrong and Miss Macaulay go delicately along the strip of herbage which divides the too familiar from the quite unknown: his gatherings are more substantial, hers have the rarer flavour. My personal gratitude would award the prize to Mr. Armstrong. I have often searched for a phrase in which to record the sensations which modern music excites in me, and I have found it at last in the voice from the gallery at the first performance of the *Eroica*, the voice of silent, suffering, subjugated millions:

'I'll give another kreutzer if they'll stop the thing.'

But what a happy world it must be, when so diligent a

¹ *The Major Pleasures of Life*, by Martin Armstrong.
The Minor Pleasures of Life, by Rose Macaulay.

search leaves so many pleasures uncatalogued. The pleasure of brushing one's teeth with soda water and then drinking a glass – a small glass – of beer before breakfast. The pleasure of having one's trousers warmed on a cold morning. The early pleasure of discovering that the old are not so formidable, and, later, that the young are not so tiresome, as one had supposed: of learning that the unwanted guest cannot come, of conducting even the nicest guest to his car: of hearing General Molendinar really say that his neighbour is not a sahib, or a Cambridge man define the Cambridge intellect. Among them there is one of such variegated richness and subtlety that I wonder it should have remained unrecorded. I mean the pleasure of going about, as to the manor born, in the streets of some ancient and famous city in tourist time: to cut across the Close without turning an eye, while the bewildered Augs are finding the place in their guide-books or craning their necks for a sight of the peregrines nesting in the spire: to be Bertha,

Dwelling in th' old Minster square,

and Ruskin 'pushing fast through the lounging groups of English and Austrians' in the Bocca: to see fresh trainloads of ignorant but reverent curiosity flowing up the High Street, to slip in front of them by Hell Passage or Friars' Entry, and to exchange a smile of secret, congratulatory understanding with Mr. Dalewaye, the bookseller, and Mrs. Emmelot, who sells the antiques.

Is this what the young call snob romanticism? Or is it glory, as defined by Hobbes, or the pseudo-feudal complex of Miss Stern? I do not know, but, on the whole,

I think a philosopher might fairly conclude from these two volumes that the major pleasures of life are exercises of the full personality: the minor pleasures are indulgences of its whims and weaknesses, the satisfaction of little appetites, and the relief from petty fears. Whatever we choose to call them, there they are, and they must have their fun. Wisely, Miss Macaulay puts in the front of her volume Selden's injunction, 'whether your pleasure be in Sermons or Plays, to enjoy them while you can'; and Mr. Armstrong answers out of Spinoza: 'the more we are stirred to pleasure, the greater the perfection to which we attain, that is, the more fully must we partake of the Divine Nature'. A great doctrine, and one which carries with it a duty not so much insisted on as it deserves: the duty of not breaking the other babies' toys. Aristotle did, I remember, make it a virtue: at least he identified and named the opposing vice, of spoiling the other man's game, not to get anything by it, but to prevent him from getting anything: and whether that amiable habit is cultivated from love towards God or hatred towards man, seems in practice to make little difference. Mr. Murdstone had his idea of the Divine Nature too: it was not in the least like Spinoza's; but it was, according to Mrs. Chillip, exactly like himself.

I wondered sometimes as I turned over the pages, what an Evangelical would have thought of two volumes occupied with the Pleasures of Life: what, if ever it came into his hands, a Communist of the austere type would think of them. One will hear the crackling of the thorns under the pot where the *bourgeoisie* are shortly, and justly, to be boiled: to the other, much

of it would have sounded like the lispings of the fires of hell. Will Poetry, Art, Music, Food, Drink, or Nature save a soul? Will Bells, Courtesy, Housepride, Matrimony, Pets, and Sermons advance the hour of the World Co-operative Commonwealth? Credulity may help, and Prison (but not if it is made as charming as Leigh Hunt's here): the Odium Theologicum, properly directed, can be irresistible (Milton was born to control a Revolutionary Press bureau). But certainly not Day Dreams: indeed, a traveller just returned from Siberia assures me that, in progressive centres there, certain places of retirement are labelled on the inside: No Day-Dreaming Here. The trouble is that the Enjoying Man, whose spiritual experiences these volumes record, is rarely capable of sectarian satisfaction, or susceptible of sectarian control. 'I know', said the Duke of Norfolk, 'I cannot go to heaven: and if a man is to go to the Devil, he may as well go thither from the House of Lords as from any place on earth.' So he renounced the errors of Popery, joined the Church of England, and took the Sacrament and his seat.

Probably he did not really believe in hell. Cowper did: and there are some passages from Cowper, quoted by Mr. Armstrong, where one's contentment is suddenly chilled by the recollection of the fearful sequel. For Cowper was a man born to be happy, who had earned the right to be happy, with his toys; so careful to use them harmlessly, so gratefully satisfied with his play. His voice has the cadence of a happy soul.

One sight engaged my curiosity and I went to see it – a fine piece of ruins, built by the late Lord Holland

at a great expense, which, the day after I saw it, tumbled down for nothing. Perhaps, therefore, it is still a ruin; and if it is, I would advise you by all means to visit it, as it must have been much improved by this fortunate incident. It is hardly possible to put stones together with that air of wild and magnificent disorder which they are sure to acquire by falling of their own accord.

There have been more costly sacrifices to the Divine Nature of Calvin, but surely none more cruel, no victim so unblemished.

POSTSCRIPT

To the manner born. — *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 4, line 12 *sqq.*

On reflection, I came to the conclusion that this little Yuletide joke was more serious than I had meant, and that *manor* not *manner* is what Shakespeare intended. *To the manner born* is the sort of phrase we repeat until we think it means something. But what on earth does it mean?

Read *manor*, and the run of ideas is quite clear.

'Is it a custom?' Horatio asks, and Shakespeare's mind at once picks up the association, 'custom of the manor'.

'Ay, marry, is't,'

Hamlet answers,

'But to my mind, though I am native here' . . .

he is following the manorial line of thought: a native,

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nativus, neif, is one born in bondage, a thrall: (the *O.E.D.* may be consulted at this point) –

‘And to the manor born’

(Villains and Neifs are always said to be
regardant to a Manor:

Folkingham *Art of Survey*, 1610)

‘it is a custom

More honour’d in the breach than the observance.’

Later, Act II, Sc. 2, line 573 the same resentment at being no more than a serf in the manor of which he should be lord, breaks out in the words:

‘O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I.’

JONATHAN THE APOSTATE¹

'WHEN the great Dean of St. Patrick's died in 1745, he had already ceased to be understood by the Eighteenth Century. No English writer of corresponding stature has been repudiated so persistently and fiercely by immediately succeeding generations.' With this emphatic assertion Mr. Quintana opens his study of Swift, but, emphatic as it is, I am not quite sure that it could be substantiated. There is no misunderstanding of Swift in Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, which appeared in 1743. There is no repudiation of *A Tale of a Tub* in *Tristram Shandy*. Johnson disliked the man, and was bored by most of his writings: but one sentence in the *Lives of the Poets*: 'Swift always understands himself, and his readers always understand him', is as precise a statement of Swift's peculiar virtue in writing, as another: 'He deserted the Whigs when they had deserted their principles', is of his political attitude.

If we go to Johnson for good sense, we go to Scott for good feeling, and his *Life of Swift*, though no one now would take it as critical biography, is written throughout in a spirit of perfect comprehension and sympathy. Incidentally, it contains a dictum which I should like to see impressed on the minds of all who believe in the application of clinical methods to biography, a heresy with which Mr. Quintana is happily untainted, 'When our doctors' (I quote from memory, but with Scott that does not matter) 'have succeeded in curing all their

¹ *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift*, by R. Quintana.

contemporaries, they may be allowed to diagnose the disorders of the illustrious dead.' Finally, hear Coleridge: 'Were it my task to form the mind of a young man of talent, desirous to establish his opinions and believe on solid principles, and in the light of distinct understanding, I would commence his theological studies by bringing together all the passages scattered throughout the writings of Swift and Butler that bear on Enthusiasm, Spiritual operations and pretences to the Gifts of the Spirit, with the whole train of New Lights, Raptures, Experiences, and the like. For all that the richest Wit, in intimate union with profound Sense and steady Observation, can supply on these topics, is to be found in the works of these satirists.'

This catena seems to me sufficient by itself to disprove Mr. Quintana's dramatic exordium, and the ensuing statement that 'later critics, the Jeffreys and the Thackerays, found a Swift mythos ready to hand. . . . To find him one must venture into regions where the commonly understood laws of moral being no longer held control. He was irresistibly evil.' Thackeray would have been flattered at this tribute to his powers as a portraitist. But what Jeffrey is doing in the same gallery, I am not quite clear, and Mr. Quintana's index does not include his name. His opinion of Swift, delivered in a review of Scott's *Life*, is certainly unfavourable: in the main, it coincides with Johnson's, and it was not perhaps unaffected by the consideration that it was to appear in the *Edinburgh Review*, and that Swift, besides having unlimited pride, a bad temper, a foul tongue, and, at least, an odd way of treating his friends, both men and

women, was a Whig who had ratted. But the first man who deemed it necessary to dip his brush in hues of earthquake and eclipse in order to paint the monster, was Macaulay, and the Thackeray portrait which Mr. Quintana finds so impressive is only the filling out of three or four lines in Macaulay's essay on the Spanish War. There, against the dear and honoured figures of Addison and Steele, stands a

darker and fiercer spirit, the ribald priest, the perjured lover, the apostate politician, a heart burning with hatred against the whole human race, a mind richly stored with images from the dunghill and lazar house.

Swift, the Firstborn of Evil, is not the product of tradition, but the creature of Whig necessities. It was unfortunate that the most memorable figures in eighteenth century literature should have been Tories. So one of them had to be pictured as a gloomy and rather shallow bigot; the other as a moral portent.

Before you go any farther, let me ask you this question: How much of Swift have you read? Gulliver, of course, *A Tale of a Tub*, perhaps. And did you like it? Johnson found it so much superior to the rest of Swift's writings as to make him doubt whether it were really Swift's own work. It is best to face one's limitations, and I must own that it is not a book I often recur to. Kindling from Mr. Quintana's enthusiasm, I tried it again, and discovered that, while I could thoroughly enjoy the narrative of the Three Sons, when I got among the interposed digressions, I was constantly skipping or straying, unless I kept my attention fixed on the pure artistic quality of Swift's prose.

I am not fond of literary class lists: I am at all times ready to uphold, in one mood Hooker, in another Hazlitt, as the greatest master of English prose. And then I come on this:

I confess to have for a long time borne a part in this general error, from which I should never have acquitted myself, but through the assistance of our noble Moderns, whose most edifying volumes I turn indefatigably over night and day for the improvement of my mind and the good of my country,

and I am prepared to back Swift against the field. The almost noiseless purr of his prose suggests a cat meditating on all the mice she has ever caught and all that await the catching. A velvet paw falls carelessly on some innocent intruder:

I would not despair to prove that it is impossible to be a good soldier, divine, or lawyer, or even so much as an eminent bellman or ballad-singer, without some taste in poetry, and a competent skill in versification. But I say the less of this because the renowned Sir Philip Sidney has exhausted the subject before me in his Defence of Poesie, on which I shall make no other remark than this, that he argues there as if he really believed himself.

But this cat is of the tiger kind, and you can hear the sleek and glossy coat of Gilbert Sarum rending as the steel claw comes down.

Lastly, I would beg his Lordship not to be so exceedingly outrageous upon the memory of the dead, because it is highly probable that in a very short time

he will be one of the number. God Almighty forgive his Lordship this manner of revenging himself; and then there will be but little consequence from an accusation which the dead cannot feel, and which none of the living will believe.

How is it done? Where did it come from? Very largely no doubt from Moor Park, and the conversation and letters of Sir William Temple. Till the time they left the University, Johnson and Swift had much the same upbringing, the same acquaintance with life. But the years which Johnson spent in Grub street, Swift passed in the household of one of the most eminent and experienced men in England, the author of famous alliances, the counsellor of kings. His range of ideas, as Mr. Quintana aptly points out, is much the same as his master's. His temper was very different. And if a gentleman be truly defined as one who never willingly gives pain, then Swift was certainly not a gentleman. But intellectually, his canons and assumptions are patrician: 'I am your superior, and you know it.' He belongs, he is conscious of belonging, to the inner circle of refined and reasonable men; men who are not to be deceived by their own passions, or seduced by the enthusiasm of others; large and discursive intellects, scholars and philosophers, not adepts of the microscope or the index; moral realists, not expecting too much of human nature or of life, but very resolute to get and keep what they can reasonably ask for themselves, and their order. In a reign of intelligence they will be the rulers: they are the natural legislators of that world of Sweetness and Light which

first opened to Swift in the library where he drafted minutes to King William, and the garden, perhaps, where he played with Stella. Out of it came *The Battle of the Books*, and also *A Tale of a Tub*, to blast the hopes of preferment on which his heart was so feverishly set.

We enter the middle period, with its crescendo of excitement and exaltation towards the catastrophe in which it all ended. Swift has become himself a figure in history, a power in the land. From thinking with the Whigs about the State, and the Tories about the Church, he has learned to think with the Tories only. What was it that drew him across the line? Partly, no doubt, the coldness of Godolphin and the caresses of Harley. But both men were true to their party type. Throughout their history the Whigs never quite knew what to do with a man of genius, with a Sheridan, a Burke, a Sydney Smith. They could have had Canning, and they lost him. They had had Swift: a little more promptness in dealing with the Irish first-fruits might have kept him. But their very languor in Church matters was symptomatic. With one eye on the Hanoverian succession and the other on the dissenting City merchants, they never took the Church, as an order in the State, so seriously as a High Churchman required. Swift, the most observant of men, was quick to notice the different atmospheres. The Tories might treat individual clergymen with contempt – Swift was in no danger! – but they respected the class. With the Whigs it was the reverse, and it was for his order, not himself, that Swift demanded consideration: for the Church, as the august defence of rational piety against enthusiasm, and for its natural ally, the Land,

now threatened by the moneyed upstarts who battened on the war. The Tory cause was the cause of Enlightenment against Faction, and in what a welter of fraud and folly the cause would be lost Swift was not permitted to foresee.

These are the years of his most effective, perhaps of his finest, work; but unfortunately it is work of a kind which has to be read against a most intricate and perplexing background. Nothing is so dead as dead politics, and the 'Conduct of the Allies', the 'Letter to the October Club', the *Examiner*, and all the rest, need as many notes and explanations as the *Knights* of Aristophanes or Caelius's letters to Cicero. It is delicate work making irony intelligible by comment. The most dexterous thrust that even Swift ever delivered is a thrust in the air, unless the reader can take in the exquisite absurdity of associating Abel Dunton with Lord Nottingham; and one must be fairly fresh from the pamphlets of Steele to appreciate 'what the poverty of our language constrains me to call his style'.

Meanwhile the reader, willing to make the effort, will find in Mr. Quintana's 'Third Book careful and trustworthy guidance through the ins and outs of the years which open with the trial of Sacheverell and the fall of the Whigs, and end with the utter and seemingly irretrievable overthrow of the Tory Party. Beyond lies exile, Gulliver, madness, death: an undying memory in the hearts of the Dublin poor: and in St. Patrick's, by his own command,

A Black Marble, deeply
cut and strongly gilded.

PURITANS AND VICTORIANS

I HAVE often, in the course of some recent studies, been perplexed to determine the exact contribution of Puritanism to the middle-class industrial civilization of England in the nineteenth century. The first difficulty is to decide what Puritanism exactly was: the second, to trace its course through the eighteenth century: the third, to separate it, in its nineteenth-century form, from other converging or parallel tendencies.

Puritanism, as I conceive it, is a double strand. There is the authoritarian Puritanism of the Presbyterians, and the equalitarian Puritanism of the Independents. The distinction is not perfect, because the Independents tended to assume a certain theocratic authority of their own; the real equalitarian tradition was driven underground; and, when it re-emerged, it was rather in the academic form of Godwin than the proletarian form of Tom Paine. But in the authoritarian brand two main constituents can be observed: Old Testament patriarchy and seclusion. The Saints were an Elect People, and, more specifically, a body of Elect Householders, ruling with divine authority their families, their servants and their workpeople. So far as they were rulers, they were very much like other householders. It was the sense of election and commission that made them what they were.

It is often said, so often that it is becoming something of a commonplace, that the exclusion of Nonconformists from public life after the Restoration led them to devote

themselves with particular assiduity to the pursuit of wealth. There is exaggeration here. Most Anglicans, and most deists, were excluded from political life, and I cannot suppose that the easy-going borough business of the eighteenth century made so much demand on a man's attention as to leave the Churchman less time than the Dissenter for his own pursuits. It was not the enforced, but the deliberate withdrawal from the world that concentrated the Dissenter's activities. Puritanism was already the creed of the commercial classes, and the most, I think, we can ascribe to it, after the Restoration, is a certain intensification of a money-making impulse already acting strongly.

But this is not what is commonly meant when people speak of the lasting effect of Puritanism. What they do mean comes out, for example, in a sentence I quote from Mr. Sitwell's *Dickens*: 'Dickens shared the genuine anti-art bias which has possessed most English people since the triumph of Cromwell and the Puritans.' But the triumph of Cromwell was the triumph of left-wing Puritanism over right-wing Puritanism, of Independency over Presbytery, won at a moment when Presbytery was rapidly coming to terms with Church and King. It was a minority regime which lasted some ten years, and was then swept utterly away. Is it to be supposed that 'most English people' had a pro-art bias in 1640, lost it in 1650 and were unable to recover it in 1660? It is to be remembered that in those ten years there were no profound, or convulsive, social or economic changes. Petty Sessions and Quarter Sessions went on administering the old laws: judges proceeded on assize: freeholders and copyholders

met as usual in the manor courts: the Universities flourished: the nobles were respected: landlords collected their rents: tenants paid them: merchants sent their ventures east and west, and, if they were successful, repanelled their mansions in town, bought a new Turkey carpet and a new set of hangings; if very successful, took a little place in the country, and commissioned some builder trained by Inigo or Webb to provide them with a manor house suitable to their new estate. Where so much remained, continuing unbroken from the past, could a little interference with Christmas games and maypoles really have converted 'most English people' from a pro-art to an anti-art bias? To put it another way, can an anti-art bias really be predicated of people who built our eighteenth-century houses and filled them with our eighteenth-century furniture, whose favourite reading in one generation was the poetry of Pope and in another the prose of Johnson, who naturalized Handel and gave Garrick a grave in the Abbey?

The common view, which Mr. Sitwell adopts, makes a break in the continuity of our civilization about 1650. Suppose now we went the way of Ur and Mohenjo Daro, and archaeologists had to rediscover our seventeenth century. Would they be forced to suppose a cataclysm to account for the change between 1630 and 1680? I cannot see it. Of music I cannot speak, and our painting has in all ages been subject to waves of influence from the Continent. But in our peculiar and native art of domestic architecture and equipment, decade succeeds to decade without, so far as I can discern, any trace even of a temporary disturbance. On the other hand, an archaeologist

who lit upon two sealed sites – the eighteenth-century rooms in the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, and a room of about 1840, if one were preserved – might very reasonably infer some intervening catastrophe, the conquest of a higher by a lower stock.

‘Nothing else,’ I can see him writing, ‘can explain the completeness of the change, not only in the character of the artifacts, but in the attitude of the people to their art. Enough has now been disclosed to demonstrate that the English of 1700 to 1800 were astonishingly gifted not only as craftsmen, but as connoisseurs. Every site reveals a fresh masterpiece, some new ingenuity of planning or delicacy of adornment, in the houses of the priests and the local magistrates. The internal equipment seems to have been directed by the same taste for simplicity, the same unerring sense of balance and proportion that governed their architecture. But at some time between 1800 and 1840 it was replaced by a barbaric and tasteless profusion, an almost aggressive indifference to symmetry and selection. An ingenious attempt has been made to associate this cultural revolution with an invasion from the Continent, the only evidence for which is a medal inscribed in a continental dialect, “Frappé à Londres” (struck at London). But what we know of continental culture in this period hardly justifies the assumption. I am rather inclined to seek the clue in a fragment of the historian Sitwell, in which he speaks of Cromwell and the Puritans converting the English to an anti-art bias, especially as in other sources Cromwell is associated with a vast destruction of religious edifices. If I am correct, we may perhaps think of Cromwell as the leader – or the symbol – of a

great social upheaval, to be dated some time about 1820, in which the art and religion of the ruling classes perished with the destruction of the ruling classes themselves.'

'Against this, I must admit, is to be set the fact that there are good grounds for placing the Puritans in the seventeenth century near the beginning of the great artistic period I have been describing. It is very attractive to connect the sudden awakening of the artistic genius of a people with some new religious impulse – such as is observable with Buddhism in the East and the Franciscan revival in the West. And the characteristics of English art in its golden age, its simplicity and the purity of its aesthetic apprehensions, do correspond in a remarkable way with the little we know of Puritanism as a religious movement. With our present knowledge the problem must be declared insoluble. But on the whole it seems most likely that the Sitwell fragment is corrupt and that the passage should read:

Dickens shared the genuine anti-art bias which has possessed most English people since the triumph of Cromwell *over* the Puritans,

the Puritans being the authors and transmitters of the artistic culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Cromwell the general name for a servile revolt not unlike that which destroyed the civilization of Angkor.'

Is there not something to be said for our archaeologist? The gradual fining down and steadying down of Elizabethan architecture and decoration into the exquisite, and yet living, quietness of the later seventeenth century does correspond with the steadying down of temper, and

the fining down of prose and manners, which are traceable over the same period, a process of which Puritanism, in its widest sense, is the most complete, the most self-conscious articulation. I really know of no reason for supposing that a Puritan gentleman did not appreciate a good house or a good sideboard as keenly as anyone else, or that his wife and daughters were not as exact as any Cavalier lady in matching tapestries or choosing chairs to go with the table. That his principles may have stirred a special dislike of everything that was splashy or overdone is doubtless very probable. But anyone who has meditated before certain Elizabethan and Jacobean monuments will agree that it was high time someone did protest – on whatever grounds – against the overdone and the splashy.

Specific Puritanism, party Puritanism, was ousted in 1660. It was occluded; led off into a side channel while the main stream flowed on; and it is, I suppose, this deviated Puritanism – cut off from corporate life, from society and from the Universities – which is to be made responsible for so much of the mischief of the nineteenth century. Again I must ask how? My eyes show me that from about 1660 to 1820, with a high tableland between 1720 and 1760, the 'pro-art bias' must have been extraordinarily well diffused among a very large number of ordinary people, so large indeed that one may almost speak of them as 'most English people'. What belated action of 'Cromwell and the Puritans' converted it into the negative or even adverse attitude which created the nineteenth-century town and house?

My diagnosis would be on other lines. Towards the end

of the eighteenth century the English eye began to lose its sense of proportion, whether in surface or in mass. The picturesque had come in as an unsettling force. About the same time the middle classes began to get rich, often very quickly. Allusion and profusion between them first blurred, then destroyed, the pure aesthetic feeling for subordination and propriety, for the right handling of a wall-surface or a room. Allusiveness ruined our architecture; profusion our decoration. What makes the first neo-Gothic churches of the nineteenth century so absurd is the complacent designer's voice at our ear, murmuring, like Fanny Price,

A Scottish monarch sleeps below.

And the little houses, once the Augustan instinct for design was lost, could only satisfy their blind craving for distinction by accumulation of ornament, or rather of ornaments, on the traditional lines of the great houses.

In fact, so far from making Puritanism responsible for the anti-art bias of the nineteenth century, I am inclined to look for the secret in a quite un-Puritan delight in unrestrained extravagance, to which the new development of mechanical ingenuity powerfully contributed, the delight of savages free at last to indulge themselves like their betters, and naturally not knowing how to do it. That the readjustment of comparative wealth, which was going on all the time, did raise the occluded Puritanism of the Independents to eminence and self-importance is no doubt true. But, so far as I can see, this Puritanism, though it was, aesthetically, in true descent from the seventeenth century, carried none of its canons forward.

PURITANS AND VICTORIANS

It was swallowed up in the stream of competitive expenditure.

Neat was their house: each table, chair and stool
Stood in its place, or, moving, moved by rule:
No lively print or picture graced the room,
A plain brown paper lent it decent gloom:
But here the eye, in glancing round, surveyed
A small recess that seemed for china made:
Such pleasing pictures screened this pencill'd ware;
That few would search for nobler objects there.

This is an Independent's room as Crabbe knew it in 1812. It would probably strike us as being very attractive. At least it had a good, if quite unconscious, tradition behind it. The owner is a wealthy provincial merchant. The business man's drawing-room of 1850 had no tradition, and usually was all too conscious of itself.

In fact, we can very easily bring the common view to a decisive test. We all know what sort of towns the Victorian middle classes built for themselves and their work-people. Swindon is a very favourable specimen: it is airy, healthy and soundly built. Go a few miles south and you will see what sort of towns those Puritans built. Marlborough, a Puritan stronghold, was destroyed by fire in 1653 and rebuilt with the help of a national subscription headed by Cromwell. The result is one of the loveliest things in England. It is a little town: it has not the amusing metropolitan air of Cirencester, for example, which always seems to be murmuring, 'Of course, you know, my mother was a Roman colony.' And I do not suggest that Marlborough was rebuilt so, because its

people were Puritans. It was the only way they knew how to build. But it was built not on a declining, but on a rising, tradition. What religion the burgesses of Blandford professed I do not know. From the pleasure Mr. Gibbon took in their society I should infer it was of a mild, accommodating kind. But we do know what sort of town they liked to live in, because Blandford too, very conveniently for historians, was destroyed and rebuilt from the ground in 1731, and it shows the same tradition maturing towards perfection, less homely, more certain, but not yet fixed. One might speculate at length on the probable outcome of an artistic boyhood spent in Blandford or in Birmingham, in the constant, unperceived presence – or absence – of a finished, deliberate, domestic art. But we are not left to speculation. Out of Blandford came Alfred Stevens. Out of Birmingham came Burne-Jones, and he fled from it as far as his art would carry him.

In 1832, the Elect Householder came to his own at last: economically as a manufacturer, politically as a voter, and no one can read the truly astonishing claims made for the middle classes, their wisdom and their virtue, sometimes by themselves, sometimes by their political flatterers, without hearing an echo of the theocratic aspirations of the Saints. But a great part of the Puritan creed, and in particular its moral and intellectual individualism, had been dropped by the way. In this, as in so many ways, New England a hundred years ago was Old England writ large: even more respectable, even less independent: morally more censorious, intellectually more servile. "I suppose their best society is like the best society in Manchester?" said Lord Roehampton.' But the

Puritanism of New England had kept what the Puritanism of the parent stock had lost, a strong sense of civic responsibility. It struck all English travellers, and the explanation is not far to seek. Insular security had long ago made the walled town unnecessary in England. New England had to start life, as a Greek would have said, 'by cities', because there were always Red Indians waiting outside to scalp the strays. Very rarely in English writing of the nineteenth century do we come upon the idea of a great town as an entity, as a thing in itself. The idea had to be built up by slow degrees. In America it was there from the first. The best society of Philadelphia was trying to improve and glorify Philadelphia. The best society of Manchester was trying to get out of it. Liverpool alone of English towns had, I think, some trace of the civic self-consciousness of a Nuremberg or a Venice, and Liverpool produced, or at least commissioned, in St. George's Hall, our solitary masterpiece of civic art. New English Puritanism would never have tolerated the abandonment and neglect of the Lancashire children. Neither, I think, would old English Puritanism. It might have worked their bodies to the bone, but it would have felt bound to do something for their souls. In one of the most powerful of Puritan sermons the preacher bids his hearers ask themselves every night, 'What have I done to-day for the Public?', for the *Respublica*, that is, or the Common Weal. When they ceased to ask, the Puritans became a *bourgeoisie*, and the trouble with the English middle classes in the nineteenth century was not that they were Puritan, but that they were not half Puritan enough.

The humanitarianism of the eighteenth century grew

out of the reunion of the nobler Puritanism with the parent Anglican stock, blending the responsibility of the one with the cultivated humanity of the other. 'The last of the great Presbyterian houses, Willoughby of Parham, rejoined the Church about 1750. Granville Sharp was born in 1735: Wilberforce in 1759: Clarkson in 1760. Johnson's plea for the French prisoners of war, one of the earliest manifestoes of the new mood, is dated 1758. The word *inhumanity*, used with reference to the animal world, occurs, so far as I can trace it, for the first time in an order of the Borough of Chippenham, 1756, forbidding barbarous sports. This blend came to its flower and fruit with the Tory Evangelicals of the early Victorian years, who did go out to battle with the Devil in the old Puritan way and not infrequently found the Non-conformist conscience in the other camp. For if the ultimate test, the *articulus stantis aut cadentis Puritanismi*, is the question What have I done to-day for the Public? there is little doubt which side could have answered it with the clearer conscience.

THE COCK AND BULL DOG¹

MR. BELLOC has written a very interesting essay, and, as it is only eighty pages long, it can, even in these hurried days, be read, as every book worth reading ought to be read, three times through: once to see what it is all about, once to observe how it is done, and once to argue with the author. I am told that the younger generation find his little ways tiresome. I can still enjoy them, and a book by Mr. Belloc in which the Roman Empire, Wicked William Cecil, the Corruption of Parliament, Official History, and the Jews did not bob up in their expected places would be as dull as Punch and Judy without Dog Toby and the Hangman. The warning to foreign critics not to attribute 'the secure and often dominating place enjoyed in English society by the Jew' to any 'natural alliance between a Protestant people and persecuted Israel' and to seek the explanation 'less in Religion than in the Commercial Spirit', is really very fine, and reminded me, as Mr. Belloc's weightier passages often do, of that bright creation of Sterne's fancy, who went through the business with such gravity that, though nothing ever came of it, he never lost the good opinion of the parish.

More than once, too, I found myself recalling two works of the past, on a similar theme, Newman's explanation of Anglicanism added to the French translation of the *Apologia*, and Hamerton's *French and English*, which I should very much like to see reissued with a

¹ *An Essay on the Nature of Contemporary England*, by Hilaire Belloc.

commentary by Mr. Belloc himself. In studies of this kind, the great difficulty is to find some agreed datum ^{line}, from which the various national characteristics can be set off and measured: and the best substitute is such a running intercomparison of two societies as, like Hamerton, Mr. Belloc is very well qualified to conduct.

Here, for example, is the sort of thing which I am sure many readers would like to hear expanded. Mr. Belloc writes: 'Where you have to deal with very large numbers and great spaces, egalitarian feeling expresses itself in concentrating the ruling power upon one man.' Fifty years ago, when we were in one of our penitential moods, the chief topic of our self-reproaches being the degradation of our working classes, the word was: look at France. The French workman is not degraded: his manners are as good as yours: he expresses himself much better; and it all comes of the spirit of equality. I think our analysis was formally correct, though we fell into grave material error by fixing our eyes on the inequality of landed possession only as the ground of our inequality in social relations. But, on Mr. Belloc's argument, France should have shown in these last fifty years a tendency, at least, 'toward the concentration of power upon one man'. Has she? I can only ask the question, not answer it. But if she has, what countervailing tendency has brought it about that to-day we look on France as our natural, and firmest, ally, against the totalitarian or despotic principle?

But before Mr. Belloc undertakes the work to which he seems called, I hope he will somewhat amplify and deepen his acquaintance with our religious history. I have never actually seen the geography book which

declared that half the births in France were illegitimate, though I have heard that it was once found in use in an English school; but I have read one which said that the Church of England was Lutheran, and it is, I am afraid, from works of this calibre that Mr. Belloc has acquired much of his knowledge of Protestantism in general, and the Anglican order in particular. One passage especially shows so complete a misunderstanding of the facts as to raise in my mind a doubt, which otherwise I should not have felt, as to Mr. Belloc's qualifications for writing on these matters at all.

Of the Authorized Version of 1611 he says:

The religious effect was more than doubled by [the] literary charm; the emotional soul of the English, highly impressionable and allied with their powerful visual imagination, was stormed by this splendid monument of the Muses . . . This astonishing document had its first effect upon the Puritan minority of Protestants between 1620 and 1650 . . . Those who were steeped in it were the directors of the successful rebellion against the Crown . . . Something like a third of English folk were more or less in sympathy with Catholicism under Charles I, but they heard the Bible week after week in their worship.

Where, in passing, the 'but' seems intended to suggest that, as our fathers maintained, Catholicism and the Bible are incompatible. .

But there is not the slightest reason to suppose that the appearance of the Authorized Version, the latest of several, caused any excitement or any change in English habits.

Anyone can easily satisfy himself as to the facts by examining the Elizabethan Prayer Book and lectionary, and Dr. A. W. Pollard's introduction to the tercentenary reprint of the Bible of 1611. To the Anglican, from the beginning, the word of God was Scripture; to the Puritan it was the sound of his own eloquence in the pulpit. Hooker was gravely apprehensive that the Puritan exaltation of the sermon would lead to depreciation and ignorance of the Bible, and his voice takes on its iciest tones when he speaks of the comfort to be derived from reading the Scriptures and discovering that God was of the same opinion as the preacher. He was right: if the Puritans had had their way, the Bible as a book, and in particular the Gospels, would to a great part of the English people have remained unknown; and its importance, on which Mr. Belloc rightly dwells, in the later development of English thought and style, springs, not from Puritanism or the Authorized Version, but from the primary and dominant position assigned to the reading of Scripture by the Anglican liturgy.

But on ground with which he is familiar, Mr. Belloc's eye for the historic landscape is always good, and his diagnosis of the Commercial and Aristocratic elements, which, with Protestantism, make up, as it were, the bony structure within which our humour, laziness, energy, and intense visual imagination harbour, contains much ingenious observation. By an Aristocratic State he means one in which the citizens at large take the existence of a governing class for granted: in other words, a 'non-egalitarian' State. To make his meaning clearer, he opposes this State to its

antithesis, the egalitarian or democratic, which in the strict sense can only exist where the whole citizen body can be assembled in the Forum or the Town Hall, and their votes counted on the spot. As a matter of fact, it would not be difficult, with a sufficiency of wireless instruments and electric pushes, to construct a democracy on the Athenian model over a very large area indeed. But while waiting for Sir John Reith to fix it up, we have to allow that some sort of representation or delegation must be provided: and the distinction therefore between the egalitarian and the non-egalitarian societies comes to this, that in one the citizens really select their representatives, and so ultimately their governors, in the other they accept them from a class which is always ready to furnish them.

If now, setting the present day out of sight, we examine the state of English society about 1870, or a trifle earlier, so as to exclude all the consequences that have followed from the agricultural depression, the opening of the Civil Service, universal elementary education, and the extension of the franchise, we have before us the aristocratic State of Mr. Belloc's definition, in, I should judge, the highest development it has ever attained. But even more striking than the vigour of the aristocratic principle – and, as Mr. Belloc rightly observes, its strength at any moment is in exact proportion to its popularity – is the tenacity of the aristocratic tradition. You trace it back to 1688. To understand 1688 you have to go to 1640 and the Long Parliament; and to understand 1640 you must go to 1536 and the Reformation. Here, of course, Mr. Belloc would

make a gap: it is part of his thesis that we have broken more completely with the Middle Ages than the other Western States. 'A Frenchman, an Italian, a Spaniard is actively in touch with the Middle Ages' (I should think the Spaniards are rather wishing they weren't): 'to an Englishman they are a foreign country.' It would, I think, be truer to say that they are a country so familiar to us that we never think about it. If ever we publicly exceed in loyalty or joy, we are picked up by a medieval officer, and fined by a medieval court. If in remorse at our delinquency, we throw ourselves into the river, a medieval functionary puts on our corpses. Indeed, the theory of the Tudor break can be brought to one easy and decisive test. Look at the map of England, France, Spain, Germany and Italy in 1300 and to-day.

And here, I think, we touch the vital clue to a very large part of our history. The aristocratic principle was the direct and immediate outcome of a stability, peculiar to England, which had given the various orders of medieval society time to sort themselves out and solidify functionally, as elements in a not less peculiar coherence. The unity which the great French rulers achieved, which Italy attained in the last century and towards which Germany is now convulsively struggling, was here something which we took for granted: and just as it was natural that at Westminster laws should be made for all England, so it was natural that the local lights, the men of leisure and influence who ran the shires and hundreds, should go up to Westminster to make them. In this way a governing class came to be thought of as part of the appointed order of things, like lambing time and harvest.

It was, I should say, fully constituted by the reign of Edward IV when it ended its long debate with the central executive by finally reducing the King's representative, the Sheriff, from governor of a province to general utility man. Two hundred years later its leaders did the same by the Crown itself, but in the strictest accord with medieval principle and precedent. 'We, who are as good as you, take you to be our King.' In the meantime it had generally accepted the Anglican settlement as the way of thinking and behaving in religious matters most consonant with its traditions, interests, opinions and convictions. And it had entered into a working alliance with the mercantile and moneyed interest.

What is happening to it now, whether it is gracefully fading into history, leaving empty manors and empty churches as its memorial: or whether it is subtly transforming itself into something as serviceable to the new age as the old governing class was to the past – and to one of these two things it must come – I confess I cannot see. But of one thing I am sure, and that is, that the most useful function of a governing class – a function which ours in its day discharged on the whole very fairly and honestly – is not to govern, but to prevent anybody from governing too much, and so long as that is provided for, I think we can, while regarding our past with some affection, continue to contemplate our future with some confidence.

THE MERCIAN SIBYL¹

TWENTY years ago, in a chapter on the Political and Social Novel, A. W. Ward asked what it was that gave *Scenes of Clerical Life* its instant success with the public of 1857. 'In the first place', he wrote, 'its gnomic wisdom, which generally takes the form of wit, is as striking as it is pregnant,' and he proceeds to illustrate its lucid directness, its lambent humour, its poetic power; and to give one example where 'it rises to the height of a prophetic saying, or a maxim for all time'.

Trust and resignation fill up the margin of ignorance.

That is not really a good sentence; the image lacks precision. But it is the sort of sentence which the contemporary reader liked to encounter, to underline, and to copy out. It is not surprising that, with the author's full approval, a volume of *The Wise, Witty and Tender Sayings of George Eliot* was published in 1872.

Great successes in literature are most often gained by a fresh and powerful handling of some recognized theme, or some established form. From Bulwer's earliest novels the fiction-reading public had been taught to watch for the *sententia*; and, of maxims which could be extended into compact and impressive discourses, George Eliot was a master. Her dismissal of Dorothea, for example, is a fine specimen of a manner perfectly adapted to the ear of

¹ *George Eliot: a Biography*, by Blanche Colton Williams.

a generation which desired to be instructed, whose interests were predominantly ethical, and which expected art to be, if not subordinate, at all events directed, to some earnest purpose.

The effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited graves.

How easily this passage could be cast into blank verse, and set down, unremarked, in *The Excursion*! The native seat of the maxim, the traditional vehicle of gnomic wisdom, was didactic or dramatic poetry: George Eliot, first among writers of prose fiction, was searched, as the poets had always been searched, for the brief, memorable, instructive Text.

Her affinity with Wordsworth is manifest: a Wordsworth brought down from the mountains to the wide landscapes and slow streams of the East Midlands, a land of unhurried business and placid, Protestant belief. It is in this setting, physical and spiritual, that George Eliot is first to be apprehended. Some people will not like it, and it may be acknowledged that to be habitually slow and sententious is at times to come very near to being a bore. But Miss Williams's book, the fruit of an ardent enthusiasm, is evidence that, with others, the enchantment is still as strong as when George Eliot's first critics spoke of that other Midlander from the Avon, and Lord Acton compared her, not altogether to their advantage,

with Sophocles, Cervantes and Dante as well. It is interesting in an age which probably regards her very much as a family might regard an aunt in the Cabinet, of whose eminence they are proud but whose visits they do not encourage, to find that the enchantment can be revived, and that after fifty years and more George Eliot can still inspire a genuine affection as well as a generous admiration.

After the Midland childhood and youth, over which Miss Williams lingers with all possible care and precision of place and date, came the rigorous intellectual discipline of London and the *Westminster Review*; and this it was that set upon her genius its identifying mark. She was an intellectual woman by birth. So was Miss Martineau. But she came before the world as a woman of finely trained intellect, which Miss Martineau was not. She was really learned: she had proved her brain by hard work on craggy themes: comparing *Romola* with *Rienzi*,¹ one's first observation is: how much better George Eliot knows her subject than Bulwer does. She shows at times the ungainliness of humour, the labour to be entertaining, which often bewrays the scholar condescending to a less serious audience. But she always has the scholar's mastery of his topic. Never could she have exposed herself to Croker's coarse, but not unjustified, advice to Miss Martineau, to ask Mamma before she wrote on Population.

What would have become of this finely balanced blend of natural genius, pondered observation and intellectual training, if she had not joined Lewes, is not a very profitable speculation. Her passionate nature, which Miss

Williams does right to emphasize, would sooner or later have carried her to some man; and if her lofty standards, old Evangelical standards surviving the loss of a formal faith, had stood in the way, she might have been wrecked in the conflict between Love and Duty. The union with Lewes preserved the balance, and made manifest her genius by releasing the creative spring. She struck into the current at exactly the right moment. A taste was forming for a wholesome and homely naturalism, restrained in its humour, not effusive in its pathos. Bulwer, always quick to catch a shift of the breeze, had opened a new line in domestic fiction with *The Caxtons*, and neither *Tamerton Church Tower* nor *The Heir of Redclyffe* is to be ignored if we are to recover the scent and temper of the years when Trollope was at work on *The Warden* and George Eliot on *Scenes of Clerical Life*. It appeared in 1857, along with *Barchester Towers*. Then Trollope went ahead with *Dr. Thorne*, and George Eliot followed with *Adam Bede*. She had won her public; but she did not have to make it. It was waiting for her.

By drawing deeply on her early memories she had, with a kind of instinctive strategy, placed herself in a commanding position. A famous jurist of the last generation once remarked: 'The sort of novels my wife likes are what I call village gossip with a dash of religion.' Piety and the Pastoral were notes to which the Victorian heart readily vibrated, and simply the placing of Dinah Morris in Mrs. Poyser's farm was enough to admit those early readers into one of the most favoured regions of their fancy. But, once admitted, what held them there?

Partly that gnomi^c wisdom, of which Ward spoke; partly the humour – it was not only all so true but all so amusing as well: and neither the humour nor the wisdom is quite in the key of our age. In her comedy, the traces of mental fabrication are sometimes too obtrusive, and a habit of self-conscious vivacity grew with time into the osseous gambollings which make her latest manner unreadable. But her character-drawing remains; and, if we could pursue it to the recesses where the secret of genius lurks, we might find that her distinguishing excellence is her command of progressive psychology, not merely revealing in successive episodes a character which was there all the while, but setting it, on a crowded stage and in leisurely time, to develop itself: to change, as most characters do change, under the pressure of relationships and the assimilation of experiences. Some do not. Celia is a perfect darling from start to finish, and no one would wish her to be anything else. Her uncle is an ass, whose pedigree runs back to the humorous figures of the Elizabethan stage, or Fanny Burney. Such stationary characters are needed to keep a story steady. But Dorothea is moving, is growing, all the time. So is Lydgate, though his motion is steadily downwards, and his growth is only from material failure to material success.

This movement, this growth, is subject to a clear, inexorable and yet compassionate law: operating, one might say, within a Scheme of Subjective Retribution. Miss Williams quotes a once-famous passage of Frederick Myers describing a conversation with George Eliot; when 'taking as her text the words God, Immortality, Duty, she pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how

inconceivable was the first, how incredible the second, and yet how peremptory and absolute the third'. To many of her contemporaries she was the Sibyl who had restated the moral law, and the processes of soul-making, in terms acceptable to the rationalist, agnostic conscience. Of Righteousness and Temperance and Judgment to come she seemed to them to reason with the weight, the fire and the conviction of a prophetess standing in the full light of scientific day. She spoke, in an age distracted between new knowledge and old belief, as Delphi might have spoken; and who, indeed, can follow the life of Bulstrode to its stricken end, 'in that sad refuge of indifferent faces', without hearing an echo of the oracle once given to Glaucus, son of Epicydes?

THE FAITH OF THE GRANDFATHERS¹

IN 1800 that Bishop of Rochester whom Gibbon called 'the mighty Horsley', and Wilberforce 'a dirty scoundrel', complained that in matters of religion 'the vicious ignorance' of the poor was balanced by 'the presumptuous apostasy' of the aristocracy. Eighty years later, John Bright got into hot water – a favourite and familiar element with him – by saying that the working classes cared as little for the dogmas of Christianity as the upper classes for its practice. Yet anyone could have confuted the bishop or the statesman by pointing to thousands of working men who were deeply studious of the Bible and its commentators, and scores of upper-class families whose life was a model of Christian decorum. The rejoinder, I suppose, would be that they were only thousands among millions, and scores out of hundreds. In other words, when we speak of Religion in the Victorian Age we mean, primarily, the movement of religious thought and practice in the Middle Class, among the people whose writings and conversations made opinion.

Where, then, did these people, clergy and laity, stand at the opening of the Victorian age – an age which may be reckoned from Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the Reform Act of 1832, Keble's Assize Sermon in 1833, or the New Poor Law of 1834? Now that the Victorian era has begun to rise again above the ignorant contempt of the last decade, there is a tendency to push the Dark

¹ *Religion in the Victorian Era*, by L. E. Elliott Binns, D.D.

THE FAITH OF THE GRANDFATHERS . .

Ages one generation farther back. Anglo-Catholics, in particular, seem disposed to borrow the old Whig dodge, of forgetting Huskisson and Peel, and pretending that every good law and every perfect law was passed by the friends and followers of Charles Earl Grey. Anyone who is disposed to think of the pre-thirties as an age of arid prelates and boozing parsons, should study as a corrective Daniel Wilson's Introduction, dated 1829, to Wilberforce's *Practical View*, then in its fifteenth edition. Incidentally, he will make a curious discovery. Jeffrey would not have wondered where Macaulay picked up that style, if he had heard Wilson preach, and known that every Sunday the Macaulay family sat under him in Bedford Row. The short, swift sentences sound like trumpets blowing for victory:

A spirit of inquiry into the great principles of Christianity has been more and more excited. The importance of Vital Religion has been more generally felt. The distinction between the form and power of godliness has been better recognized. The idea of a purer Christianity has prevailed. The general tone and character of religion has been elevated. The details of Christian duty, the doctrine of morals, the obligation of the holy law, are all in progress. At the Universities, the higher standard of preaching, the vigilance exercised over the morals of the students, the strictness of the divinity examinations, are so many pledges of good. The pious parish priest is the guide, the comforter, the pastor of his flock. One point remains, without which all other criteria would be fallacious. It is

the diffusion of 'personal and family piety, which denotes the abiding mercy of God with us, and prepares for every future blessing.

Including the Oxford Movement? Unquestionably, because it was only in this seedplot of 'personal and family piety' that the Movement could have taken root and flourished. 'Our brethren of the Establishment,' Hall, the great Baptist preacher, wrote, 'hold with us that without holiness none shall see the Lord.' 'I hung on the lips of Daniel Wilson', Newman said, 'when he gave the history of Thomas Scott's life and death, and for years I used almost as a proverb what I considered to be the issue of Scott's doctrine, "Holiness before Peace".' To say, that 'the Oxford Movement derived some measure of quickening power from the Evangelical Revival' is an understatement almost amounting to a mis-statement. The power came from the moral atmosphere which the revival had created. That the atmosphere was now charged with elements for which the Revival had not allowed; with the corporate philosophy learned from Coleridge, the historic understanding imparted by Scott, is very true: in Newman's admirable phrase, they had interested the genius of their age in Catholic truth. The time was ripe for a supplementary and corrective revival: 'for a better understanding of the foundations and proportions of the Church's polity, and the nature and value of her discipline.' These are the words of Bishop Blomfield, judging the Movement in 1842, and they are both generous and exact. There is something to be said for Greek-play bishops. They could usually write English.

But the self-protective instincts of English Protestantism felt, whether rightly or not, that the Oxford Malig-nants – the title supplied by Napier to Arnold's article in the *Edinburgh* – were doing more than revive ideas or observances neglected since the Reformation. They were undermining the national defence against Popery, and of all the Thirty-nine Articles the only one that Englishmen at large could ever be got to take any interest in, is that which asserts that the Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England. In 1903 a Dorset farmer was summoned for not paying his education rate. His objection to that impost was unambiguous. 'I wean't', he said, 'pay money to set up the Pope over we for to rule we.' Of the No-Popery panic in 1850 Dr. Elliott Binns writes that 'it is simply inexplicable to the present day'. The present day must be singularly dense or have a singularly short memory. That the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill in itself was as foolish as the agitation which compelled the renaming of the *Leviathan* as the *Great Eastern* may be admitted. Was the rejection of the New Prayer Book by the House of Commons a few years ago so much wiser? Behind the No-Popery uproar there was a great body of ancestral prejudice, no doubt, but also of reasoned conviction. Many wise, pious and tolerant men believed, out of Scripture, that the Pope was Antichrist. At home they saw in Catholic Ireland the gravest menace to the stability of the Empire. Abroad, they compared the Lothians with the Campagna. Little more than thirty years ago an educated Dissenter assured me that the view commonly held by older members of his denomination was that no Roman Catholic would be saved. In

1866, Bickersteth, who died Bishop of Exeter in 1906, published an immensely successful epic on the Four Last Things, which is well worth the attention of anyone who is not satisfied to find his ancestors inexplicable and leave them so. In the last book the beauties of a regenerated earth are described. From its face rises one solitary volcano. It marks the spot where Rome had stood.

But a philosophic eye, contrasting, let us say, the year of Catholic Emancipation with the year of No Popery and the Great Exhibition, would have noticed three or four significant changes. The institutions of religion are much more vigorous: churches are fuller, services more frequent and moving, the auxiliary societies more flourishing. The tide which set in some fifty years earlier shows no signs of ebbing. On the other side, he would observe that controversy is angrier and more spiteful; that there is a new tension and distress in many thoughtful minds, and a growing indifference to the whole matter in many more. And if he could return again at the end of the century, he would find the tide running out fast. Somewhere between those years we must put the decisive secularization of English society and thought, a process the origins and stages of which it would be interesting to have traced for us. Perhaps one might put it thus. The conception of a Church transmitting a tradition and interpreting it by authority had no place in the general English mind or imagination. The faith of Protestantism in its various modes was a documentary faith, and the documents were losing their validity. When Hale White was a young student for the ministry, he and his companions were suspected of loose views, or

doubts, of Scripture, and the question was tendered to them: 'Do you believe a thing because it is in the Bible or because it is true?' What the answer to this Lady-and-Tiger dilemma may be, I do not know. Neither did they. So they were expelled.

Could the documents, when analysed by the new criticism, and read in the light of the new biology and archaeology, justify the philosophy that in the course of ages had been raised on them, or developed out of them? To a Catholic the question does not present itself 'quite in this way, but England was Protestant. And to an ever-increasing number the answer was definitely no. They were making the discovery which Ruskin made, that the religion in which they had been brought up was simply not true. To a smaller group the answer was yes, in so far as that philosophy explains the world to me, or explains me to myself. In other words, the only alternatives open to a sincere and thoughtful mind were agnosticism, often a reverent and almost pious agnosticism, and a religion of personal acceptance. The social atmosphere was on the whole decidedly adverse to belief. 'People suppose', Creighton said, 'that a man who takes orders must be a knave or a fool, and they know I am not a fool.' Our natural talent for compromise gave for a time a certain standing to thinkers who, like Seeley, Arnold, and Hutton, seemed to have found a possible *Via Media* —

Correcting 'I believe' to 'One does feel'.

One might call it by great and solemn names, 'the stream of tendency making for righteousness', or the *testimonium*

Spiritus Sancti. But that was what it meant. Nothing was left of which you could say, 'It is true, because it is in the Bible'.

But if, at the same time, you are keenly aware, in Coleridge's phrase, that the Bible 'finds you', that the Hebrew prophets, the person and teaching of Christ, the experiences of St. Paul do, in a very remarkable and unique way, interpret to you your own problems and those of the world, and perhaps – perhaps – indicate a solution for another age to discover, then surely it is the path both of wisdom and of duty, to hold fast to the old forms of observance and devotion, and compel them, if they can be compelled, to yield what once they had yielded, assurance of the saving and regenerating impulse imparted to mankind by Christ through his Church, and renewable, whether morally or mystically, in the Sacraments.

I am trying to describe what I believe to be the central area of the higher religious thought in Late-Victorian England; out of which issued the movements, common to the Anglican and the Free Churches, towards a more profound and liberal interpretation of the Scriptures, a less forensic and more philosophical reading of the Creeds, a more concrete and vigorous sense of coherence and continuity, of the personal origin and historical transmission of the Faith. On the other side, the creed and programme of its secularist thought need not to be set out anew.

Without denying that in the matter of religion some things are true and some things false, still we

certainly are not in a position to determine one from the other. And, as it would be absurd to dogmatize about the weather, and say that 1860 will be a wet season or a dry season, a time of peace or war, so it is absurd for men in our present state to teach anything positively about the next world, that there is a heaven or a hell or a last judgment, or that the soul is immortal or that there is a God. It is not that you have not a right to your own opinion, as you have a right to place implicit trust in your own banker or your own physician: but undeniably such persuasions are not knowledge: they are not scientific: they cannot become public property: they are consistent with your allowing your friend to entertain the opposite opinion, and if you are tempted to be violent in the defence of your own view of the case in this matter of religion, then it is well to lay seriously to heart whether sensitiveness on the subject of your banker or your doctor, when he is handled sceptically by another, would not be taken to argue a secret misgiving in your mind about him; in spite of your confident profession, an absence of clear, unruffled certainty in his honesty or his skill. Well, then, if Religion is just one of those subjects about which we can know nothing, what can be so absurd as to spend time on it?

One does not feel disposed to say again anything that Newman has said already – had said, it will be observed, in 1859.

KATHERINE STANLEY AND
JOHN RUSSELL¹

I WAS grateful to the snowstorm of February 28th which gave me an excuse for sitting over the fire and reading *The Amberley Papers* all day. It is not a dipping book, but a complete story, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, which was perhaps less tragic than it seems. The Amberleys had had the best of life: what was to come might not have been so well. He might have come to shrink from her vitality: she might have grown tired of mothering him. But she died at thirty-two of diphtheria caught from one of her children: he followed her soon.

John Russell, Viscount Amberley, born in 1842, inherited many of his father's qualities, without that toughness which kept the old Prime Minister alive to eighty. He had the Russell shyness and courage, and all the Russell aptitude for upsetting coaches, their own or other people's. On his mother's side he was an Eliot, grave, uncompromising Protestants from the Border. But there was, in Fanny Lady Russell, much mirth behind the earnestness, and the character which emerges from her letters is that of a far livelier woman than the editors, drawing perhaps on the memories of a grandchild, would lead us to suppose. Her definition of a 'charming evening' –

not a word of gossip: many words on many high matters –

¹ *The Amberley Papers*, edited by Bertrand and Patricia Russell.

is to be treasured, and if it suggests a somewhat tense intellectual atmosphere, the impression is very happily corrected by the thumbnail sketches of persons and incidents in other letters. Lecky in love is inimitable; Lecky on his honeymoon must be quoted:

Willy had seen the well-known long and lanky form twisting and turning and forcing its way through the streets of Lausanne some days before and we tracked him out. We were all very much taken with her. He blushes when he calls her Elizabeth: she doesn't blush when she calls him William. He has learned to carry cloaks and shawls for ladies, but has not learned to put them on. He is revising his book on the Irish leaders. She said she didn't approve of his writing so much during a wedding tour, to which he replied, 'I should grow so very tired of doing nothing'.

In Amberley himself this strain seems missing. He was, it is all too plain, a rather dull young man, and I found the tepid amorism of his school and college days very trying. 'Personally insignificant' was the judgment of an American acquaintance, who relates how, Amberley having got out of his depth at an intellectual party, his wife drove over the next day and insisted on having the conversation repeated with herself in charge. But Katherine Stanley, Lady Amberley, is a superbly vigorous and independent creature: a true granddaughter of the adorable Maria Josepha Holroyd, one of whose letters to Gibbon opens with

DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN

Mon âme est sans culottes

and is signed

Citoyen! Ton égale Maria,

and who, it seems strange to relate, was still living, as Grandmama Stanley, and as much interested in the world as ever, when Kate's journal opens. 'It is dreadful', the granddaughter writes, 'not to be willing to die at 91', and she warns her brother not to talk to the old lady about Jowett because it would excite her too much.

But, in and about 1860, Jowett was one of the most exciting men alive, and it was difficult not to talk about him. Kate was not allowed to keep his essays on the Pauline Epistles, but she had made extracts which she circulated among her friends. Her brother Lyulph was at Balliol, quite under the spell; and in so disputatious a family as the Stanleys every heresy was sure of a hearing and a defender.

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith proves false, I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight.

The grand assault had opened; the air was as thick with contending banners as the streets of a county town on polling day; and exactly where Jowett, with his little hands on his little knees, stood, or rather sat, in these matters, was one of the questions on which the public mind would have been most glad to have satisfaction.

Indeed, in the early sixties, when John Russell and Kate Stanley were growing up, there was not much beside theology to think or talk about. These were the halcyon years of politics, when a Queen's Speech might contain no promise, or threat, of any legislation whatever, and, simply for want of something to do, the Leader of the Opposition once had to ask for a return on the subject of Noxious Vapours. The educated classes were using their leisure from State affairs to reconsider their attitude to God, Duty, and Immortality. No generation, I suppose, has ever been more thoroughly penetrated with religious ideas, more attentive to religious observances and obligations than that which was young and active from 1830 to 1850, the generation of Mr. Gladstone. Ten years later, though the mood or temper was much the same, the traditional beliefs which gave it body were disappearing under the dissolvent action of science. It is one of those epochs when the gap between the generations seems wider than usual. Jowett spoke of Clough's *Dipsychus* as 'a kind of English Faust'. 'But I expect', he added, 'it is intolerable to anyone over fifty.' One knows so well the sort of book which is intolerable to people over fifty; aggressive, irreverent, hard to make up one's mind about. Shall we try to keep up, like Grandmama Stanley, or shall we drop behind? Shall we mask our fears with a bland superior smile, or frankly take to scolding? We have only to look about us to see how many attitudes are possible when old-established opinions are under fierce revision, and in these papers we may observe their counterparts sixty and seventy years ago.

There are the young people growing slowly, earnestly, and sometimes painfully, out of the convictions into which they had been born or educated. There are the believers in Youth as Such, with Mr. Carlyle to tell them that belief in Youth is the greatest mistake of the day. There are those whose charter is Mill on Liberty, those to whom Darwin is a new revelation, and those to whom Comte is the final revelation, as it might be Marx now. Some, particularly the girls, are resolved not to allow themselves to be unsettled; some, particularly the boys, are bent on unsettling everybody. They read heavily, they think hard, they correspond persistently. Victoria Russell is engaged to Mr. Villiers. The proposal took place while they were buying a tea-kettle in Soho. He is going to be a curate. Mother is much shocked by Frank Newman's *Phases of Faith*. But she is strongly in favour of the Utilization of Sewage. I want a really good book on Physiology to teach the village girls. From what I took in of Dr. Temple's essay on the nature of Christ's mission, it seemed to me to be excessively fantastic. Jowett has heard of monkeys praying every morning with folded hands on the seashore to the rising sun. Would it be possible to omit the reference to the Trinity from the marriage service? Arthur Stanley says no, but he has an explanation which seems to make it all right. It is very bad taste to call us a 'godless couple'.

Let them be shocked and pained if it must be so. We will ask them to confess, if not at once by the force of reason, then later by the force of facts, that the fruits of the Spirit may be granted to those who have

flung off the ancient creeds like chaff, and stand upright, pure, and noble, without their aid!

Does this strike anyone as silly or sentimental or superficial prattle? It interests me so much that I don't care if it does. In the correspondence and journals here preserved we catch a large and important section of English society, the enlightened Whig aristocracy, under the guidance of its intellectual advisers, Grotes, Mills, Carlyles, Buckles, Huxleys, Leckys, Morleys, and the rest, in the very act of making up its mind, a process usually as elusive to the observation of those without as the freezing of the sea. And the Whig aristocracy is still the statelier half of the ruling class, its splendour little dimmed, its indifference to the Court, and its dislike of Royal manners, as lofty as ever. When the frozen stream of political energy is released by the death of Palmerston in 1865, its younger, and more adventurous, members naturally go Radical, and Radicals, who like a lord almost as much as Americans do, are very glad to have them. Grote had high views of Amberley's future. But it seems doubtful whether, if he had lived, he could ever have been more than an earnest writer and occasional speaker. For Lady Amberley, at least in Mrs. Grote's affectionate fancy, the brilliant destiny seemed to be reserved of being to the new Radical, or perhaps Republican, party what Mrs. Grote herself, with immensely fewer advantages, had been to the Philosophic Radicals forty years before; making of Chesham Place a new Holland House for reformers, agnostics, positivists, and trade unionists; and a forum for the issues of the

coming time, Women's Suffrage and education, birth control (over which poor Amberley, with true Russell inopportunism, burnt his fingers badly), the organization of labour, and public health. She had all her lines thrown out, and Kate, it is clear, was a strategist of no mean capacity. But I question whether even she could have overcome that dissidence between the social exclusiveness of the Whigs and the intellectual arrogance of the Radicals, the consequences of which are with us to this day.

The bridge-like quality of the sixties, where Mill and Grote, ageing and revered, wait ready to pass on to Morley and Leslie Stephen the torch they had lighted from Bentham and Malthus and another Mill, stands out more forcibly in these pages than in any other record I can recall. I must own that there are rather many of them; Amberley was a long-winded fellow, and some of the details relating to the arrival of the little Russells struck me as being, in our grandmothers' use of the word, unnecessary. Yet I am not sure that this very abundance of trifling intimacies was not required to make the picture complete, giving it a kind of aerial perspective in which the Nottingham election, and the South Devon election, and the Hyde Park riots, and the Fenian descent on Chester, appear as they really did appear to people who were all the time thinking quite as much about their babies, and their nurses, their mothers-in-law, and their gardens, and who took their position at the head of affairs and society for granted. Certainly that Devon election, fought chiefly on an innocent question put by Amberley to the doctors at a private meeting of the Dialectical

Society, was a foul business, the chief difference between reformed Plymouth and unreformed Eatanswill being that Eatanswill was, by comparison, decent, and Pott and Slurk, by comparison, fair. But the lovely, suggested background of those closing years of aristocratic rule goes to one's heart – the deep peace of the West, of the woods and meadowlands of Rodborough, which Lord John had bought in 1855 to save himself from despair, in his hour of political extinction, 'when other men would have shot or drowned themselves', and when, as the editors point out, Greville was acidly commenting on his unruffled self-complacency. The long rides of the lovers, too, over the Cotswolds or by the Severn, remind us that the Ruling Class is still the Riding Class. Life goes by at a horse's pace, and the figure of greatest dignity in the whole book, I think, is Lady Strangford's coachman, who was so little acquainted with the East End of the town that he returned from the Mansion House to Regent Street by way of Islington. The most vehement is the little Princess Beatrice, who, asked to choose her birthday present, spoke out bold and plain:

The head of Bismarck on a charger.

But the heroine, no question, is Katherine Stanley.

TEMPUS ACTUM¹

THE more carefully one studies the years between the death of William IV and the accession of Edward VII, the more difficult it becomes to find anything to which the word Victorian can be correctly and exclusively applied. Much to which we commonly give the name, turns out on a closer acquaintance to be simply nineteenth century, or simply European. 'She had been brought up in one of the most exclusive establishments for young ladies, where three objects are regarded as of the highest importance. First comes French, then the piano, that she may be able to soothe and amuse her husband in his leisure hours; and, lastly, a thorough acquaintance with the principles of household economy, in its highest and most aesthetic sense, including the art of knitting purses.' Now, which is the Victorian element in that passage, the insistence on trivial accomplishments, or the contempt for trivial accomplishments? As a matter of fact, it is not Victorian at all: it is not even English. It is Gogol's account, in *Dead Souls*, of the education of a Russian lady, and I quote it from a Nonconformist periodical of 1868.

Turning over the pages, I come on this. 'If Mr. Farrar has been in the habit of meeting such boys as he describes (in *Eric*), we can only say that a most kind and indulgent fate has not permitted us the same advantage. Young gentlemen who do nothing but walk about their school playgrounds with their arms round one another's necks,

¹ *As I Remember*, by E. E. Kellett.

discussing the various responsibilities of a Christian's duty, deserve to be caged and kept for public exhibition. Boys and girls who are perpetually stopping in the middle of their play to say prayers and sing hymns are simply nauseating. And boys and girls who bristle with texts, quote long passages of Scripture, refreshing themselves at frequent intervals by reference to Dr. Watts, are specimens of juvenile humanity whose society would be unbearable.' Again, one asks, which is the Victorian? Farrar and the writers of good books, or their Nonconformist trouncer, who stands by *Tom Brown* and *Alice in Wonderland*?

The truth is that much of what we call Victorianism is a picture at second-hand, a satirical picture drawn by the Victorians themselves. The word does undoubtedly mean something, but what it means has to be built up by going behind the criticism, the invective, and the caricature, and examining the originals. I once heard it suggested that the typical Victorian saying was, 'You must remember he is your uncle', and it certainly brings in one important element: patriarchal order and status in the family group. But I suspect it was heard quite as often in France or Germany. When Bishop Wilberforce was killed, Mr. Gladstone passed some hours in silent depression; then he observed, 'He was a Great Diocesan', and recovered his spirits at once. This impulse to say the right, the improving thing, is more characteristic of the Victorian temper. The gossip-columns of the time are full of such pronouncements. Once a servant was sent to meet Sir Bartle Frere at the station. He asked how he was to know him. 'Look for a grey-haired gentleman

helping some one." And, of course, the Proconsul was duly found lifting an old woman's basket out of the carriage. Now there is no harm in saying that, if it is true and you really mean it. The mischief comes of saying it because it is the proper thing to say. And in the Victorian age that mischief was peculiarly rife. Why?

Imagine a large family, and therefore of necessity a well-organized family, framing its life and conversation on Scripture and the traditions of the elders: in most cases a happy family, with minds well occupied and bodies well exercised; conscious of its election, and just a little conscious, perhaps, of its social inferiority to the gentry: it is from such a corner as this that we must learn to think if we are to get the Victorian panorama true. Into such a corner Mr. Kellett conducts us. The ordinary educated, evangelical household is in many ways the pivot of Victorian life. Taken as a body, these families determined reputations and decided elections. Their approval gave a composer or a writer rank as a classic. Their abstention from the polls made Disraeli Prime Minister in 1874. Their forgiveness reinstated Gladstone in 1880. They sentenced Parnell and Dilke. 'Whom they would help to a kingdom, these reign, and whom again they would, they displace. Finally, they were greatly exalted.' Over a great part of English society, especially in the ascendant Midlands and North, their way of thinking, acting, and speaking was dominant. They were often surprisingly tolerant; they accepted the infidel Morley and they had a soft place in their hearts for that imp, Lord Randolph. But, on the whole, it was safer to conform and to speak with what, from 1832 to

1885, was the accent of a ruling class, an accent to which Gladstone was born, and which Disraeli never mastered.

'I have seen', Mr. Kellett writes, 'no such rapid or complete change as that which took place in the eighties and nineties. It was like one of those catastrophes which the geologist used to postulate in order to explain the alterations in the earth: sudden, immense, and, I think, irrevocable.' He is speaking particularly of the religious outlook of the generation which now took Darwin for granted, and was therefore ready to receive the Higher Criticism. 'What mattered the miracles of Elisha when the point was whether the whole thing was not a huge delusion?' In other ways, too, those decades were a time of catastrophe. The landed interest sank: the lead of the staple industries shortened: the manufacturer made way for the financier: Africa was partitioned: the Liberal Party broke up: the name of Whig was forgotten: the Family was shrinking. In those years of upheaval we can see our present-day mind coming to birth, and of all the elements in the convulsion perhaps the most potent was the transformation of religion from a public and documented system of beliefs, practices and aspirations to a provision for personal needs.

Thus Victorian thought before the catastrophe expresses itself in an idiom which has to be learnt, and Mr. Kellett's memories, therefore, apart from the abundant entertainment they incidentally provide, are of real historical value. They take us back into the world of certitude and Special Providences, before the Agora had been deserted for the Waste Land of Specialism. One of his stories I can cap, and one, I think, I can correct. The

DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN

wife of an Anglican dignitary, invited to open a Wesleyan sale of work, was reduced to painful and unseemly giggles by the initiatory exercise:

O Lord, Thou knowest we are about to have a little bazaar.

And surely the instruction at the head of the Ten Commandments was 'Candidates should attempt the fifth and seventh, and at least three others'. But his central theme is one which can never be emphasized too strongly – the busy, happy, humming vitality at the heart of Victorian life. And, as Mr. Kellett is a scholar, the comparison, so unexpected and yet so true, comes naturally to him as he remembers it. In its many-sided curiosity and competence, its self-confidence and alertness, this Late Mid-Victorian culture is Greek. In its blend of intellectual adventure and moral conservatism, it is really Athenian. I doubt if any lines of Tennyson were more often quoted by contemporaries than these:

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster.

No words could express more perfectly the Victorian ideal of perpetual expansion about a central stability. But would anyone guarantee that they are not a translation from Sophocles?

A DISTINGUISHED VISITOR¹

I CALLED on Goethe as usual in the afternoon and found him most animated and happy. He began at once: 'Who do you suppose has been with me this morning? An Englishman. And what Englishman?' He paused to enjoy my bewilderment, which was not lessened when he explained, with genial satisfaction, that it was Sir Lucas. 'Come,' he said with playful reproachfulness, 'you should not be so backward in acquainting yourself with the eminent foreigners who come to Weimar. And this, if I am not mistaken, is in the real elements of distinction one of the most eminent of them all.' I excused myself for not knowing the name and asked whether he was a writer. 'Not yet,' said Goethe, 'but I hope that my encouragement may cause him to take up the pen. I would give much to read the comments of so ripe a mind on the state of Europe, seen by eyes equally practised in the ways of business and of courts. No,' he went on, after a pause in which he seemed to be going over in his memory the principal heads of the conversation that had given him so much pleasure, 'it is only in England that you find so much individuality and at the same time so strong a feeling for what is central, classical, form-giving. A Frenchman with the originality of Sir Lucas would be fantastic. A German of the same sobriety and poise would be stupid.'

¹ *Neue Gespräche mit Goethe*. Aus dem Nachlass J. P. Eckermanns: herausgegeben vom Prof. Alois Rüdtenkrätzer: Greifswald: 1936. Translated by permission of the Editor.

I asked whether he had learnt anything of the Lord's history and career. 'Yes,' said Goethe, 'he was most friendly and communicative. He said that, presenting himself as a stranger, it was only a duty to give me some account of himself. That was admirably tactful. You see, his insight at once told him that I should naturally desire to know as much as I could of a person of his obvious eminence, and to spare me the embarrassment into which my curiosity might have led me, of questioning him in a way he might have felt indelicate, he offered to tell me, and did tell me, everything that could be of interest in him to me.' Here Goethe interposed a cordial encomium on English tact. I said that I had observed the quality in the Duke of Wellington, whom I had once seen descending from his post-chaise in front of the Weisse Löwe at Darmstadt. 'It is the island type', said Goethe.

'Sir Lucas', he went on, 'has been a great merchant, in close relations with the court, and he now lives away from the capital but maintains his connection with both. Now here you have combined in one personality all the influences which form a true culture. A long and intimate experience of men in all classes, and of their affairs, with an admixture of court life to refine the expression of this experience, and of rustic existence to bring it into harmony with Nature and the Whole. Such a view of the material and the ideal, of the unitary elements and the formative totality, is hardly accessible in the same measure to anyone but an Englishman. I ventured', he continued, smiling, 'to apply a certain test which would, I believed, at once verify and define my conception of

him. I showed him the letter from the Grand-Duke of Hackenkreuzberg.' 'But', I said, in some astonishment, 'was not that a very great distinction to confer on any foreigner, however eminent and intelligent?' 'If', said Goethe gravely, 'he had been merely eminent, yes. To the combination, it is our duty to pay such homage as is in our power. But if you are surprised that I showed him the letter, what will you say when I tell you that I consulted him as to my reply?' 'I should indeed be curious', I said, 'to see how he responded to so exacting a test. To me I own the problem would have been insoluble.' 'He considered for a few minutes', said Goethe, 'and then replied in words that I shall never forget. "I have heard," he said, "of this prince, and I should be happy if you would convey to him my sentiments, the sentiments of a plain Englishman, that the true greatness of monarchs is to be measured by the prosperity of their subjects. Happy is the country where loyalty and sincerity may kneel hand in hand before the steps of the throne."' I did not at first see the connection of these two apophthegms. But the fault was mine. The connection is too profound to be perceived in a moment. I should not be surprised if you do not see it yet.' I did not, but I reserved my desire for enlightenment, because I was anxious to put another question. 'Did your illustrious visitor', I asked, 'give evidence of an ethico-aesthetic outlook on life, comparable in grandeur with the force and acuteness of his purely practical and dialectical organization?' 'Ah', said Goethe, beaming, 'your question is right. So it is that we should judge men. And, while we were talking, I was constantly searching

for ways to penetrate this region of his moral being. But this truly admirable man must have divined my secret desire. Without any ostentation he turned the conversation on to his family. And what a picture of moral worth he gave me. "One daughter", he said, "has followed the husband of her choice, a scholar and divine, into a life of rural tranquillity, under the protection of a great lady, whom both regard with tender reverence." Conceive how this story spoke to the heart of the creator of *Hermann and Dorothea*! Two others – I am not sure whether they are daughters, or wards to whose upbringing he has devoted himself – have contracted equally felicitous alliances. In their happiness my worthy visitor assured me he found his own. And', continued Goethe, rising and pacing with animation up and down the room, 'in parting he left with me – what do you think? Two pictures of the houses where two of these young ladies live, and where, if anywhere, he said with the most touching but dignified modesty, he believed his name was held in affectionate regard. My hand trembled as I received these symbols of a morally perfected culture. I feel myself ennobled to have been the subject of such an emotion, imparted by such a man.' Goethe handed me the prints, which I received with an emotion derived from his. They showed two noble baronial castles, set in what I judged to be a Scotch or Highland landscape. One was named Rosings, the other, I think, Pebmermy.

OLD BOOKS: OLD WINE: OLD LOGS¹

G. M. Y.: So did I. Mine was that the air menace had materialized (or perhaps eventuated), and I fled with all the note-books and pencils I could lay hands on, meaning to save for posterity as much as I could remember of civilization. I woke up repeating the names of the stations on the Underground.

M. B.: A clear case of escapo-fetichism. But you have not filled one of those note-books. I have.

G. M. Y.: You have indeed, and I have not enjoyed anything so much for a long while. All the time I was reading it, I was running my own fancies against yours, and I left off feeling as if I had written a companion volume.

M. B.: I wonder how far they would overlap. My French is stronger than yours, I think.

G. M. Y.: Mine, I fancy, is not so good as Wellington's, but rather better than Burke's. You remember, he used to read Racine as if it was English, or Irish, rather.

Say Vaynus toot intoire a sa proy attashee.

No, I am afraid that except for those few who, like yourself, really can speak French, there will always be a glass wall between us and their verse, certainly their classical verse. I can see the poetry of Racine, but I cannot hear it.

M. B.: Then it is no good asking you whether

¹ *Have You Anything to Declare?*, by Maurice Baring.

Ariane, ma soeùr, de quel amour blessée
 Vous mourûtes aux bords où vous fûtes laissée?

at which Alfred de Musset fainted, is good verse or bad?

G. M. Y.: None whatever, because I should never dare to say *mourûtes* in the presence of a Frenchman.

M. B.: But as the Greeks and Romans are all dead, you take what liberties you please with them. Once, on the Acropolis, a man in skins came up to me and asked me what I was reading. I gave him an ode of Sappho, and he read it aloud in his rustic speech, remarking at the end that it was in patois. I never heard anything more beautiful, and the experience left me convinced that the pronunciation of modern Greek is much nearer the ancient than most of our authorities allow.

G. M. Y.: I wish I had been there, or that you had arranged for a record to be taken. The gramophone is one of the few machines that really have done something for literature. I am not addicted to the prose of Mr. Joyce, but when he reads the end of *Anna Livia*, I feel like the little girl who listened to Coleridge for an hour, and burst into tears when he left off.

M. B.: Then he did sometimes leave off?

G. M. Y.: It is the only recorded occasion. But let us avoid the pronunciation of Greek: it usually ends, I have noticed, in the two parties trying to roar one another down like old Blackie, when Mr. Gladstone declaimed Homer at the top of his voice, shouting, at the top of his: 'Mr. Gladstone, I don't believe a wurred of it.' Besides, have we any right to talk? Are we not amateurs?

M. B.: We love Greek poetry.

G. M. Y.: And dilettanti?

M. B.: We take delight in it; and what we know we got from the air we breathed when we were young, as the Elizabethans did.

G. M. Y.: And Charles James Fox, I suppose, because, really, one cannot find space in his early life to plant the Greek which he undoubtedly possessed. You have read his letters to Trotter: if we had two hundred pages of Fox's notes on Greek poetry, instead of barely twenty, we should see that he was one of the finest scholars we have ever had. But let us get back to France. You were saying about Racine –

M. B.: That there is a freshness and purity about his verse, a glory as of the lilies of the field, which is simply not to be rivalled

be rival Italy or Greece.

G. M. Y.: I know, and now and then I can just hear it.

Tel en un secret vallon,
Sur le bord d'une onde pure,
Croît à l'abri de l'aquilon
Un jeune lis l'amour de la nature.
Loin du monde élevé, de tous les dons des cieux
Il est orné dès sa naissance;
Et du méchant l'abord contagieux
N'altère point son innocence.

Then I run up against 'the amiable Samuel', and the spell is broken.

M. B.: But *aimable* does not mean amiable.

G. M. Y.: I know it doesn't, any more than *charmant*

means charming, but I cannot help feeling that they do. The result is that while my logbook is full of French fragments, from *Roland* to the Pleiade, and from Victor Hugo to René Arcos,

Rien n'est perdu: parcequ'il suffit
 Qu'un seul de nous dans la tourmente
 Reste pareil à ce qu'il fut,
 Pour sauver tout l'espoir du monde,

for the classic interim I need a guide, and you have all my gratitude.

M. B.: Are you forgetting Molière?

G. M. Y.: May my right hand forget his cunning!

Si le roi m'avait donné
 Paris, sa grand' ville:
 Et qu'il me fallût quitter
 L'amour de ma mie:
 Je dirois au roi Henri

M. B.: Thank you: thank you: that will do.

G. M. Y.: Tu l'as voulu, M. Baring. Let us leave Molière to himself. When the Romantic dawn comes up, I can see my way again.

M. B.: Then Victor Hugo . . .

G. M. Y.: Nay, sir, if you talk of Victor Hugo, talk on. Or, rather, read me what you have said of Boöz Endormi.

M. B.: 'In reading verse like this we are conscious of something more than descriptive power and more than the choice of right words: an inner vision, a divine alchemy that touches words and changes them into more than mortal gold: a vision that does more than see things:

that sees beyond and behind the meaning of things and peers into the secret workshop of God.'

G. M. Y.: I think that is entirely and exactly true. If I had to explain what poetry is, to an intelligent angel just arrived from a wholly prosaic sphere, I should give him the last two stanzas of Boöz. If I were limited to one line it would be:

Quel dieu, quel moissonneur de l'éternel été.

'What god, what harvester of the eternal summer' – you see what beautiful English it makes –

Avait, en s'en allant, négligemment jeté
Cette faucille d'or dans le champ des étoiles.

What useful things stars are!

M. B.: As Dante knew. But Dante knew everything: he knew how to finish the story of Ulysses.

G. M. Y.: But lesser people make them serve:

A voice fell, like a falling star.

Which reminds me, seeing that you stand up so stoutly for Macaulay –

M. B.: You are with me?

G. M. Y.: We are all with you. When a man has written the Jacobite's Epitaph he is beyond the need of defence. I would even stake his title on one line of the Armada:

Till broad and fierce the star came forth on Ely's
stately fane.

No, what I was going to say is: How is it that you have not more Longfellow to declare? Have you forgotten

him? Granted that his own little lodge garden is not particularly well stocked or interesting: Be Nice to One Another done in lobelias, and too many photographs of Nuremberg over the fireplace; still, for all right-minded children, he is one of the Openers of the Gate. I remember the immense happiness I got from *The Golden Legend*, and, looking back, I realize it was the right kind of happiness: pure literary enjoyment. And are his translations – the *Coplas* of Manrique, above all – as fine as I used to think? You are a master of the craft, and must know.

M. B.: The only really satisfactory translations are not translations at all, but equivalents, arising spontaneously, when both poets are in the same mood and contemplating the same object. Because Shakespeare, in Claudio's great speech, translates Dante, it does not follow that he had ever read him, though I should like to think he had. The wonderful dawn over the sea at the beginning of the *Purgatorio* comes straight out of the *Peleus and Thetis*. Could Dante have read Catullus?

G. M. Y.: Perhaps we had better not inquire too closely. All that is known is that the unique Veronese manuscript disappeared about the time when Dante was living at Verona.

M. B.: We will not inquire at all, then. But if I told you that these lines,

Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night:
And weep afresh love's long-since cancelled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight,

had been rendered by some modern master of Latin verse —

Quo desiderio veteres renovamus amores
Atque olim missas flemus amicitias,

you would admire, but you would not be surprised. But they are Catullus himself, translating Shakespeare. Themes float and drift from one age and language to another, and Nature contrives these correspondences.

G. M. Y.: When Keats looked into Chapman's Homer, what do you suppose he saw?

M. B.: Something much less like Homer, than Pope's, which he must have known already.

G. M. Y.: Very true. But in the Fifth Book, where Pope writes:

Far as a Shepherd, from some point on high,
O'er the wide Main extends his boundless Eye,

Chapman has:

and how far at a view
A man into the purple sea can from a hill descry.

M. B.: And then Keats went home and wrote the Cortez simile. Or did Homer write it?

BOSWELL – AND UNASHAMED¹

ONE can have too much of a good thing, and I am not sure that the nineteen volumes of the Isham collection have made any addition to the joy and instruction of humanity at all comparable to their intrinsic bulk. But the curious fortune which has presided over Boswell's remains – some turned up in a parcel of waste paper at Boulogne and others are still the subject of argument in the courts of Scotland – has preserved and at last revealed one piece of quite exceptional interest. It was discovered by Lady Talbot of Malahide in 1930, in a cupboard, where it had been placed by the late Lord Talbot to dry, when he was arranging the Boswell papers some twenty years before, and it proved to be the actual Journal which Johnson saw, and pronounced to be written in very good English. Not good enough for Malone, however, and, briefly, the textual history of the *Tour to the Hebrides* is that the version published in 1785 is the Journal, with many personalities and indiscretions struck out, the style improved by Malone, and the end written up, after Johnson's death, from memory or brief notes.

The editors have, very wisely, decided that, as the *Tour* is one of the most readable books in the world, the new version should be as readable as the old. Soon enough, hungry docturients will settle on its pages, collating Boswell with Boswell-Malone, and reckoning the proportion of commas to colons; and their work will be

¹ *Boswell's Tour to the Hebrides: from the Original Manuscript.*

lightened by the faultless printing of this volume. It is a physical pleasure to read a book set by the Haddon Craftsmen in Monotype Baskerville. Incidentally, the editors have, with due regret, exploded one of the finest emendations on record; under September 1st, the printed version reads:

The very Highland names, or sound of a bagpipe, will stir my blood and fill me with a mixture of melancholy, and respect for courage; and pity for an unfortunate, and superstitious regard for antiquity; and inclination for war without thought; and in short with a crowd of sensations.

Dr. R. W. Chapman proposed to read

pity for an unfortunate land, and;

but it now appears that Boswell wrote

pity for the unfortunate, and superstitious regard.

And, when one tries it over, is not 'unfortunate land' a trifle too stylistic or romantic for Boswell? One thing is clear: he did write very good English. He had an excellent ear; he could detect provincialisms in the speech of Garrick and Johnson himself, and very rarely will a phrase be found to show that the writer was not born on Attic soil. Hume to the end had to keep by him a list of things that are not said, such as looking over a window for looking through it, but Boswell was born free.

This idiomatic ease is part, the superficial part, of his genius for getting into the middle of every situation in which he found himself: not by any sensitiveness to atmosphere — he was sometimes dreadfully obtuse — but by an innocent and effervescent gregariousness, irradiated

with the fancy of a child. His religious feelings are of the same cast – sincere, rapid, imaginative. ‘If a fool would persist in his folly he would become wise’, and if Bozzy could have persisted in anything but drinking and writing the Life of Johnson, he might have become a mystic, a field-preacher, or a forerunner of the Oxford Movement: the only sentence the Duchess of Argyll deigned to address to him, ‘I suppose you will be a Methodist’, got home. That his religious views were more advanced than Johnson’s was well known. But still it is a little surprising to find him clasping a stone cross and praying to St. Columba. True, he calls him St. Columbus, but that was not his fault, and doubtless he did not thereby lose his intercession; and that, on his return from these nocturnal devotions, he should put his leg in a rabbit hole and have to rub it with rum and vinegar will not, to those who know their Boswell, be surprising at all. ‘That man is little to be envied whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona’, and here the *genius loci* had him in thrall. He read one of Ogden’s sermons aloud, vowed eternal fidelity to Sir Allan Maclean on the Black Stone, and resolved to lead an exemplary life ever after. He then found that he had got hold of the wrong stone, and ended the evening – well, the printed Journal says that

Sir Allan, Lochbuy, and I had the conversation chiefly to ourselves.

They had more than conversation, and the consequences elicited a magisterial distinction from Johnson. ‘Burke’, he said, ‘would get drunk and be ashamed of it;

Goldsmith would get drunk and boast of it.' Poor Bozzy could do both: in the matter of drinking, he remarks, 'I am *dubius, non improbus*'.

From the printed text, these exhibitions of 'mental nakedness', as he calls them, have disappeared. But the more one knows of Boswell the more one likes him: no one ever took such pleasure in the spectacle of human variety, and he simply could not understand why his victims did not always share his delight. After all excisions, enough remained of the visit to Armadale to make Lord Macdonald extremely angry, and Boswell's notion of an apology was to send a friend to tell Lady Macdonald that he had really left out quite a lot. It is all here: how there was no claret, and a very bad dinner; how Macdonald kept the company standing while he got to work on a liver pudding; how he helped the punch with the soup ladle, and she drank with her mouth full; and how the *tedium vitae* at the Castle was relieved by a supper with the farmer of Coirechatachan where there was a carpet and sugar tongs, and a meal which is set forth with loving, Homeric precision: minced collops, fricassee of fowl, ham and tongue, haddocks, herrings, frothed milk, bread pudding, and syllabubs made with port wine and served in syllabub glasses. 'Our host's father had found a treasure of old silver coins, and out of these he had made his plate.' After which, the hostess kissed him on both cheeks, and sent him to sleep in a clean bed with red and white check curtains. Many years later, Scott, arriving with a yachting party, asked them what they were thinking of when they landed on Skye. They all answered: 'The verses that Johnson wrote that night at Coirechatachan.'

THE SWEET ENEMY¹

GIVEN two armies, both tired out; in numbers and leadership more or less equal; the chances are that the one which receives an unexpected increase of strength will win. If, in 1429, the English Government had sent 5000 men at arms, or, better still, 500 gunners, across the Channel, Orleans would have fallen, and the Dauphin would never have become King of France. Instead, St. Michael the Archangel, St. Catharine, and St. Margaret sent Joan of Arc to Chinon. When it was all over, the English Government published a version of the affair, which, translated out of the devout verbiage in which ecclesiastical lawyers found release from the injunction against profane swearing, reads rather like a White Paper on the misguided life and deplorable death of a Suffragette under the Cat and Mouse Act. The Belgian chronicler, who had no space to waste, summarized it with sufficient accuracy: 'Joan claimed to have as her familiar an angel of God, who, by the judgment of learned men, was found to be an evil spirit. By his instrumentality she became a kind of witch, and was handed over to the public authorities to be burnt.' In which view, it must be remembered, many thousands of her countrymen heartily concurred. But, when once the novelty of the Girl Warrior had worn out, the great majority of them seem to have thought little about her, one way or the other.

¹ *Saint Joan of Arc*, by V. Sackville-West.

As Miss Sackville-West observes, we may have to wait another five hundred years for the solution; already we know far more about her than they knew in 1436, and by 2436 we may know everything. But while waiting for 2436 to arrive, we may, with such appliances and reagents as we have at our disposal, conduct a preliminary survey, narrowing at least the area within which the solution is to be looked for. Personally, in a matter where it behoves us all to walk warily (one of Joan's judges remarked: 'If she had said I think, instead of I know, she would have been acquitted'), I believe that the psychological explanation is adequate. The case for hallucination, to use a clumsy word, has been put in the most persuasive and sympathetic way by Jules Auriac, in his *Véritable Jeanne d'Arc*, and, on the whole, I find it convincing. But those who admit the possibility of miracle – that is, of a forcible intervention of the spiritual into the material order, will also, I think, admit that the spiritual commonly has to take the material as it finds it. We may, therefore, set our problem thus: What sort of little person was that Jeanne d'Arc who, between her twelfth and thirteenth birthday, heard the Voices? In what sense she 'heard' them is another question. Historically, it is a secondary question. Historically, the important fact is that, starting from that point, she became what the world remembers: a 'miracle of the miracles of God' possibly, but assuredly a 'conqueror of banners'.

Mr. Shaw's preoccupation with the social status of his heroine, his concern to know whether the milkman would have called her Joan or Miss Arc, has been taken by some

readers as a misplaced flippancy. Does it matter what position in the village hierarchy she held? It matters considerably, because it was an essential part of Joan's psychology. She behaved like a lady because she thought of herself as a lady; in her graceful attentions, for example, to the widow of her great predecessor, the Constable Duguesclin, there is more than natural kindness: there is high-bred courtesy. I speak with diffidence in a matter which Miss Sackville-West has studied much more deeply than I, but I doubt whether any girl of Joan's rank, endowed with Joan's wits, is fairly represented when she is described as 'poor, ignorant, uninstructed Joan'. By English reckoning, Jacques d'Arc was well within the class of forty-shilling freeholders: he was evidently regarded by his neighbours as a solid, knowledgeable man, the sort of man whom, if Domrémy had been Downton or Worth Alta, they would have sent, half-gratified and half-grumbling, to serve his term in Parliament. It was an age when families with a little money in hand were going up in the world. Many of our own great houses were starting, in the fifteenth century, from the point which the Arc family had reached: a snug little property to fall back on, and a stewardship, a rangership, or a useful vote at Westminster, as rungs in the social ladder. But for success, the one thing needed was knowledge of the law, and, at home or at the church porch, Joan must have heard endless argument over the conduct of a suit, over points of tenure and the descent of lands, and the exact rights of France, Lorraine, and Bar in the divided valley of the Meuse. The *termes de la ley* come naturally to her lips, and part of the trouble at Rouen was that, not content

with conducting her own case, she would manage the trial too. 'Go on to the next point.' 'That has no bearing on the case.' 'I will say nothing that goes to the King.' 'I have warranty for what I say.' 'I doubt the relevance, but you may consult your assessors.' In one of her first interviews with the Captain of Vaucouleurs, she explains her errand in correct feudal language. The King, she says, is to hold the kingdom in fee: as a benefice, that is, for which he must do suit and service to his overlord in Heaven. Her business was to secure him in possession, and see him crowned at Reims. When she had done it, she became helpless and vague: the tide ceased to flow: she had come to the end of her ruling ideas, one might almost say, of her brief.

I doubt if Miss Sackville-West allows enough for this pervading legalism of medieval life. It was a favourite thesis of Stubbs's that in the Middle Ages wars were fought on the point of right, while wars of interest came in with the Renaissance, and the point of right was usually the point of law governing the descent of the fief, an issue well within the comprehension of an intelligent girl. If the Dauphin was the old King's son, then he was King himself. That Joan was a furious little partisan as well is doubtless true. Much of the fancy and experience of her childhood was occupied with the scrapping of Armagnacs and Burgundians: dangerous scrapping, when cattle were driven off and villages burnt: harmless scrapping, from which brothers returned with the blood running down their faces. The sight of French blood flowing always made her bristle, but, with one of her convenient lapses of memory, she could not recall whether

she had scratched any Burgundian faces herself. One can guess. If only I could put on boy's clothes and give the Burgundian pigs a lesson! Or, mounted on a splendid white horse with a shining banner – not the pennon of a knight, but the banner of a great captain, scatter the enemies of the King, and give him seisin of his fief! Then, said the Voices, why not do it?

When St. Paul, on the road to Damascus, heard his first Voice, his mind was, we can be sure, deeply troubled by the part he had taken in certain recent transactions; and when, some time later, he received his commission to leave Jerusalem and go to the Gentiles, it leapt at once to his secret:

Lord! Thy martyr Stephen!

So, it seems to me, Joan lets us into her secret when she answers her Voices with the fluttered protest:

But I can't ride! I don't know anything of war!

Who said anything about riding? Surely this is the very accent of a child half in consternation, half in delight, over the disclosure of some dearly cherished and long-hidden dream? She was between twelve and thirteen. Whether this fact has any particular bearing on the story is a question on which a lay opinion is of no value. Miss Sackville-West is disposed to dismiss it as of little consequence. Of much greater interest is a conjecture of Siméon Luce. Joan was inland bred, and so she naturally thought of mounting to drive her King's enemies out of his land. If she had been a Norman or Breton girl, the Voices might have told her to take ship and keep them

from coming in. One question which the Court did not ask, but which one can hardly help asking oneself, was this:

You say that the first saint who appeared to you was St. Michael. Was that before or after you heard that the English ships had been destroyed off Mont S. Michel?

But was the Dauphin the old King's son? As Miss Sackville-West observes, his own mother could hardly have said, and she appends a calculation which makes it at least highly improbable. It was Joan's difficulty at the Trial, and it is our difficulty with Joan. The judges were not folklorists investigating an interesting survival of Tree-Worship in Lorraine, or psychical researchers examining a medium. They were assembled to determine whether Joan's visions and voices were of God or the Devil, or the product of a disordered mind. It was notorious that by means of them she had done great mischief to the established Government, and they could not go behind the Treaty of Troyes, on which the authority of that Government rested. It was part of the public law of Europe, and the constitutional law of France. The presumption was therefore against the first possibility, and, as the University of Paris held, the choice lay between the other two. But any presumption may be rebutted by evidence, and the questions put to Joan were, in substance, two: Will you lay all your evidence before us? and, Will you accept the finding of the Court on it?

If, with these questions in mind, one reads the Interrogatory through, one becomes aware that Joan is hiding

something, and we can see what it was. In her own mind, the truth of her mission and the King's legitimacy were inseparable: the Overlord would never have awarded the fief to a bastard. Therefore, she must keep them apart, so that even if her mission is discredited, the rights of the House of France will stand unaffected.

• With this clue, we can track her mind at work through a curious blend of frankness and evasion. We can understand, what has given her friends so much trouble, her clumsy romance about the Angel who brought the King a shining golden crown in the presence of three hundred people. It is the child's device, when the probe comes too near the secret, of retiring behind a screen of invention, which will keep the questioner busy and puzzled and put him off the track. The Court was evidently greatly interested in this story: they gave her every opportunity of providing corroborative evidence if she could. As she could not, they not unnaturally came to the conclusion that she was lying all round. Therefore, the revelations were not of God. If it had been a simple case of careless driving, the kindest bench would have been bound to convict.

But to the second question Joan's answer was as uncompromising as that of Socrates or Antigone. Directly advised and instructed by Voices from the Church Triumphant, she would not acknowledge the finding of the Church Militant. She did not think, she knew, that St. Michael, St. Catharine, and St. Margaret had spoken to her: spoken to her daily for years; most often, it would seem, when the bells were ringing for service, or when she was alone with the rustle of branches in the woods.

They had told her to rescue Orleans, and she had rescued it; to crown her King, and she had crowned him. What else they had promised her, whether Paradise hereafter or deliverance now, by angelic help or a rising of the Rouen people: whether she died confident or forsaken, is one of those dark places which few of us care to explore. She was just nineteen. She had not expected a death by fire, and she recoiled terribly from her doom. She had recanted once, and revoked her recantation. Did she recant again? It is on record that on the last morning of her life she acknowledged that the Voices had deceived her. But the record is of doubtful authority, and the story ends in mystery, as it began.

MAITLAND¹

SOME years ago it was proposed in Cambridge to issue, with due comment and annotation, Maitland's Collected Papers. 'The Syndics of the University Press did not, however, see their way to a new edition on these lines, and another project was suggested. This was to select certain of the papers likely to be most useful to students in law, history, and politics, to edit them and publish them in one volume . . . The editors venture to think that they (the students to wit) have here all that is of practical use to them; and they have put them upon their inquiry as to where they can find the rest.' In other words, if you want to get marks, you will read Maitland's *Selected Essays*: if you want to waste your time, you will read Maitland.

I cannot think this attitude accords either with the function of an Academic Press, or the respect which a university ought to show to the memory of a master. Granted that some of Maitland's work, now forty years old and more, is 'touched with obsolescence', no passage of time can dull the genius which vibrates in every paragraph he wrote. As Bentley said of Bishop Pearson, 'the very dust of his writings is gold'. But it does not follow that the dust heap is the proper place for them: and such an edition as Professor Hazeltine and his colleagues first proposed would be not only a noble memorial to a scholar of incomparable inspiration, but

¹ F. W. Maitland: *Selected Essays*.

a history of the progress of the studies in which he was a master. I hope it will still be undertaken. After all, Syndics are not like other publishers. They can always cover their losses by bringing out a Prayer Book in red, white, and blue, or a new Bible with camera studies of Behemoth and the Pygarg.

Someone may ask what right I have to speak, and I fully admit that much of Maitland's work is above my head. But it so happens, thanks to a good teacher, that on one subject which he treats of I am not altogether uninformed, and never shall I forget the evening when I took down *Domesday and Beyond*; and read, and read, till the owl in the fir tree began audibly to wonder why the lamp was still burning; the little breezes that stray down the dene from Wansdyke turned chilly; and the dawn came. I have just opened it again, and if I do not shut it quickly, this paper will not get written to-day, or to-morrow: no great loss, perhaps, were it not that I have one or two things to say about Maitland which I believe to be worth saying, and, at this particular time, needful to be said. In passing, I invite the Syndics (and Delegates) to look at the last paragraph of that book – and blush, if Delegates and Syndics can.

But before I go any further, I should like to define to myself the character of Maitland's mind: and the first thing that strikes me is its companionable quality. He is never telling you: he is always, most genially and modestly, arguing, never so far ahead that you cannot follow, with a deliberate invitation at every turn to tell him something of your own, and an unforced humour playing over the whole debate. Our intelligent Press

periodically sets as a competition: Whom would you most like to take a country walk with? The entrants must be much less modest or self-conscious than I am, because, of their two favourites, I doubt if Dr. Johnson would have thought me worth talking to, and I am sure I should cut but a poor figure after ten miles' unmitigated Socrates. I should without hesitation choose Maitland, not so much for anything he might have to say, as to observe his gift of entering into 'the business, projects, and 'current notions of right and wrong' in other ages; and his power of 'making the thoughts of our forefathers, their common thoughts of common things, thinkable' once more.

By taking the history of law and institutions for his province, Maitland planted himself in the position where his genius for thinking other men's thoughts could operate with most effect. Law, as he understood it, is fundamentally a system of common thought about common things: the things and the thoughts, the actual doings, for example, of a villein or a trade unionist, and the reflections thereon of Bracton or the judges in the Taff Vale Case, reacting on each other, and modifying each other into a pattern of such shifting intricacy that the most comprehensive vision will not take in the whole pattern, and the keenest eye will misread some of the incidents. They say now that his theory of the defensive origin of the boroughs is 'wrong', or, what is worse, 'imaginative'; and I am reminded of the warning in my school edition of *Julius Caesar*: 'Do not talk about Shakespeare's mistakes: they are probably your own.' But very likely his critics are right. As he says himself,

'the new truth generally turns out to be but a quarter truth, and yet one which must modify the whole tale': and in a world so perplexingly contrived as this is, a frank and joyous acknowledgement of ignorance is the only way of wisdom. 'We must go into the twilight, not haphazard, but of set purpose, and knowing well what we are doing'; and, when all the other classes have been abolished, there will remain the distinction between those who know that all hypotheses, interpretations, creeds, programmes, and what not, are questions, and those who suppose them to be answers.

At no time did this truth need to be more frequently or emphatically restated than to-day, and I am glad that the Syndics have allowed the editors to print the essay on the Body Politic, written apparently for a dining club, in which Maitland delivered his profession of faith, and his warning against the facile acceptance of systems. So entirely does he seem to belong to our own world, that it is with surprise one remembers that he was born in 1850, and was nine years old when Macaulay died. But he grew up in a time when systems were the mode, when Auguste Comte had turned the history of the world into a commodious suburban residence — theology on the ground floor, metaphysics above, and the clear light of positivism shining in at the top floor windows: and young Darwinians, going far beyond anything that Darwin would have countenanced, were tracing the development of society with as much assurance as if they had been there all the time: just as, with not less confidence, their grandfathers had propounded the Scheme of Redemption or the Wage Fund Theory, and their

grandchildren now propound the materialistic conception of history.

So long as historic systems are in vogue, so long that warning voice will be needed. How plausible they all are, each in its day! How much they explain that was dark before! How easy they make things! How much trouble they take off our minds! Very well: then answer this question on any system you like. In the nineteenth century, the European nations borrowed from us the criminal jury which they had abandoned, and we had kept. Why had we kept it? Try it on Positivist or Evolutionary or Materialistic principles, and see where you get to. Maitland's answer comes with a flash which makes even his editors blink. 'Tut tut,' their footnote says, 'this is a built-up area, and he went through at thirty-one.' I do not know whether the answer is right, but I quote it as the best example in this volume of the soar and swoop which marks Maitland out as the most inspiring of all historical companions. He made of history the Gay Science. To account for a detail of legal history, he lifts to the third century, and watches the Manichean heresies streaming for a thousand years along the Mediterranean coasts to Languedoc. But we were an Orthodox Island. Therefore the Church had no need here to enforce the inquisitorial process proper for the detection of heresy. Therefore we kept the jury. And the next moment he is on the ground, searching the year-books for such grains of truth as that a use in law is not a *usus* but an *opus*, and that medieval lawyers sometimes liked to show their superior education by spelling it *oepe*.

The swiftness with which Maitland moves over the field, and the microscopic observation which never seems to weary on the longest flight, together make him, it seems to me, an almost faultless example of what Bacon called the *intellectus purus et æquus*, 'never distracted by study of particulars and never lost in contemplation of the entirety,' the *intellectus simul capax et penetrans*, over which the Idols of the Cave and the Theatre have no power. This volume has set me reading again his *Canon Law in the Church of England*, which of all his works I have always most admired for the logical dexterity with which the argument is sustained, and most enjoyed for the dainty and respectful malice with which he plants his barbs in the great Bishop. Here he is fencing with an equal, exchanging secret professional jokes between the bouts. In his *Constitutional History* and the chapter on the Elizabethan Settlement of Religion, which some may regard as his masterpiece, he is speaking tutorially. Elsewhere, and for the most part, he is the explorer reporting his travels as he goes. It is unfortunate for his fame – which he would not in the least have minded – and, what is more to be regretted, for his influence, that so much of his work was involved in technical matters. But I doubt if he left a page, I am sure he did not leave an essay, which has not startled some fit reader, not so much by the range or the precision, as the appropriateness of the learning revealed – the right detail coming exactly at the right moment – or made him glow with that sense of confident and delighted energy which only the highest genius can communicate. And they who have received it will impart it as they can.

Goethe (or someone else) said of (Winckelmann, I think, but I see that this quotation is not going to be so impressive as I intended): 'Man lernt nichts, aber man wird etwas.' One learns nothing, but one becomes something. I certainly do not think it any more desirable that we should all become historians than that we should all take courses in dentistry, plumbing, and cookery. But it is, I believe, of some concern to the Commonwealth that we should all brush our teeth, wash with reasonable regularity, and eat well-chosen food well prepared, and in the same sense and degree a right historical attitude seems to me of special consequence in an age when a wrong attitude is being so diligently inculcated for partisan ends. The materialistic conception of history is no more than the sectarian perversion of the great and truly philosophic doctrine – first adumbrated by the French and English historians of the eighteenth century – that all historic forces are interconnected. But historic forces have their seat in human observation, reflection, and purpose: 'in business, projects, and common notions of right and wrong': they act through the minds of men, they reveal themselves in – at the last analysis they are – their 'common thought of common things'. There they must be looked for, and there only will they be found. And of Maitland we can say that, in his chosen field, no man ever searched more diligently, and no man ever saw so much.

A MUCH ENDURING MERCHANT¹

THE high editorial standards set for the Hakluyt Society by Schomburgk ninety years ago, and further raised by Henry Yule, have never been better exemplified than in these five volumes. The first appeared in 1907, but the editor did not live to see his work completed, and now, after thirty-two years of collaboration, Miss Anstey has delivered the last. The tale of Peter Mundy is told. Taken together, text, drawings, notes, and index, the work is an encyclopaedia of travel and traffic in the first half of the seventeenth century, and Mr. Mundy, of Penryn, takes his place, not as an explorer, because he never went far from the well-beaten tracks, but as one of the most patient, industrious, and observant travellers on record.

Aubrey, who had a vague undocumented notion that Mundy had gone from Archangel to the East Indies by land, had heard of his Memoirs and his great collection of rarities, coins, and prints. The rarities have been scattered, but the memoirs, arranged in thirty-six relations, with a computation showing that the author had travelled 128,733 miles (and five furlongs), is preserved in the Bodleian. In 1894 W. L. Courtney, writing on Mundy in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, suggested that the Hakluyt Society might make something of it: Sir William Foster, of the India Office, took the hint, and finally, in Sir Richard Carnac Temple, the manuscript found its predestined editor.

¹ *The Travels of Peter Mundy, 1608-1667. Five Volumes.*

The Mundy family were merchants in pilchards and tin, who had done well out of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, when the grandfather quitted religion, probably on a pension, married, and went into business. But Peter's immediate antecedents and circumstances are still somewhat obscure. He was certainly born in 1597, and his first journey was taken with his father to Rouen in 1608. Thereafter, he was started in his career with a year of French at Bayonne, three or four voyages to Spain as cabin-boy, or master's apprentice, and two years in the Peninsula 'attaining' the Spanish tongue, or something sufficiently like it to pass muster. Thus furnished he was shipped to Constantinople as clerk to Mr. Wyche, of London, in the *Royal Merchant*, among the passengers being Mr. James Garroway. Do you recognize the name? You are right. These are those Garroways, dealers in tea and tobacco, who gave their name to the coffee-house in Change Alley, from which the fatal message about chops and tomato sauce was sent. And now Mundy's character begins to show itself. He is one of the most impersonal of travellers. He seems to have been on good terms with most people, of intimacy with few or none. He never seeks adventure, and never avoids hardship. He simply goes about the world noticing things, and on his return overland from Stamboul in 1620, the idea luckily occurs to him of putting his observations down on paper. Stamboul had impressed him greatly: it struck him as being like Penryn. 'A presumptuous comparison,' he adds in the margin; and we may remember the confession of another traveller, who was heard, leaning over his native bridge

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and murmuring: 'It was a lie, it was an awfu' lie.' I tauld them that the Tweed at Peebles was wider than the Ganges.'

With the return from Constantinople, through the Balkans to Spalato, by sea to Venice, and thence by way of Lombardy and the Alps to Blackwall, Mundy's life of perpetual observation may be said fairly to open. He had found his job:

The day's travel proved somewhat easy in regard the day was not very hot of itself, and the next, 'our way being through shady woods all that day, ascending and descending pleasant mountains [they are somewhere in Bosnia], which exceeded all others I ever saw for height and beauty, not steepy, but rising gently by degrees, the tops being as good ground as the bottom and as fertile. I do remember that in a parcel of the country we passed the ground was near covered with a kind of wild red rose of a perfect good smell and colour, but single, growing close to the ground on little sprigs.

In the History of the Picturesque this passage should have its place. A beautiful mountain is one which you can walk to the top of, and cultivate. So, too, at Venice, after an approving but cursory glance at St. Mark's Place and the Rialto, he hurries off to what really was worth seeing, the order and magnificence of the Arsenal and the Bucintoro. But the Alps are hardly worth a mention: he does not even call them horrid.

A larger scene opens. Mr. Peter Mundy is appointed factor under the East India Company, and ordered to

'Surat, with a salary of £30, exceedingly pleasant quarters in the Company's house, with its fountains and trellised vines, and sound beef and mutton cooked by English servants. 'But ordinarilie we have dopeage', which does not, however, mean what it sounds like, and for the first time in history (unless the *Oxford Dictionary* has betrayed me) kedgereee appears on an English bill of fare. Would that it had been the last! Mundy arrived just in time to see the famine of 1630, one of the worst in Indian history, and that winter he travelled from Surat to Agra through a desolate country, men fighting for grains in horses' droppings, and city gates blocked up with corpses. But he took it as part of the landscape: his nerves were tough. No one ever enjoyed an execution more heartily, and for animals he seems to have had no feeling whatever. His dealings with the wounded seal whom he met on the beach at St. Helena remind us that he lived before the humanitarian age.

But elephants always interested him, and he could sketch them cleverly. In fact, his drawings, done from memory, are often excellent, and his observations of plants, birds, and fishes are acknowledged by the authorities to be most exact. The rich cargo of things seen which he brought back from the East is not to be shown in parcels, but as an example of his descriptive skill I should select the progress of Shah Jehan, with 'lances glittering most brightly against the sun', and the elephants moving in formation 'like a fleet of ships with flag and streamers'. St. Paul's, which he saw under repair on his return in 1634, reminded him of 'a stately elephant with a pavilion on his back in the middle of an

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army': and the elephant fight at Achin, with the females harnessed to the hind legs of their lords, to haul them out of danger when they got really savage, is described and pictured with equal gusto.

After a short and busy holiday he is off to the East again, first to Goa, then to Mysore, which 'resembles England for the lovely, low, rounded hills'; and farther, always farther, to Singapore, Canton, and Macao, where he almost realized his heart's desire, which was to cross the Pacific to Mexico, and so back by Havana and Cadiz. It could not be managed, but on his way home by the Cape he had a good look at Madagascar, and made a collection of shells and native words. Poor Mundy! So passionately sure that there was nothing in the world like England, no landscape to equal the Isle of Wight between Cowes and Ryde, no ship to match the *Sovereign of the Seas*, no garden like Wilton, no church like St. Paul's or the 'high and spiry steeple of Salisbury', nowhere such peace and tolerance and good government; and to be always having to leave it all and go off to earn his living in foreign parts! Next time it is to the Baltic, a seven years' unprofitable stay in Danzig, with, however, an excursion round the North Cape to Archangel, and the usual sheaves of social and physical observation. He was particularly struck by the distinguished position held in German society by the public executioner. It was curious: or do we say, is?

When he returned, he was just fifty, and tolerance and good government were hardly the characteristics of England in 1647. For seven or eight years he lived quietly at home, a sound but cautious Anglican and

'Royalist; then, 'sundry losses and crosses, repairing of ruined houses and redeeming land sold', drove him to seek employment abroad, and he sailed on his last voyage to the East: a short one this time, for he was back in eighteen months, landing at Woolwich on September 3rd, to roam no more: to contemplate the august pageantry with which the Commonwealth buried its great sailor and its great soldier: to note in rapid succession – Lord Protector Richard put out – Fleetwood, Commander-in-Chief – A Committee of Safety set up – Monk is marching from Scotland – Monk has declared himself – the Lords and Commons have called back the King: 'from Blackheath to Whitehall the fields, highways and hedges covered with people, the trees laden with boys, the streets thronged, the windows full. The bells rang out, and from the ships and Tower Wharf the ordnance thundered.' I am glad he was there to see it, but I wish he had not been quite so particular in his account of the executions which followed His Blessed Majesty's Restoration. He lived just long enough to hear of the Dutch ships riding in the Medway. Then he disappears from sight; when or where he died, no one knows. But I hope that death came to him, as it came to another enforced wanderer, 'very gently, from the sea'.

EPILOGUE¹: MAY 12

To judge of any institution fairly, the observer must withdraw himself out of the mist and hum of contemporary excitement and transient emotion, and view it under the frosty starlight of history. There is an eddy, a rush, a sheet of foam, and the stream flows on. It has flowed now for a very long time, because, of all the great institutions of Europe, only the Papacy surpasses the English Monarchy in antiquity, and the origins of both are so remote that, when we first encounter them in history, they are already venerable and accepted. The coronation of 1937 followed in all essentials the order of the crowning of King Edgar in 973, and in 973 King Edgar's house had reigned four hundred years and more. A roving warrior or minstrel who had knelt to Theodoric in Ravenna, and prostrated himself before Justinian in Constantinople, might, in his wanderings, have shouted and drunk deep at the feast where a barbaric chieftain, having carved out a principality for himself and a territory for his followers, in the valleys and hills that look seaward to Purbeck and the Isle of Wight, sat down in his father's seat, put on his father's helmet and took his sword, and was acknowledged king. So it all began.

Already we have the Enthronement, the Crowning, and the Girding of the Sword. Whence comes the Anointing? Undoubtedly from the Old Testament; but,

¹ *A History of the English Coronation*, by Professor P. E. Schramm. Translated by L. G. W. Legg.

The Price of Liberty: A German on Contemporary Britain, by Professor Adolf Löwe.

as Dr. Schramm points out, oil was used in so many Christian rites – in baptism, for example, and the consecration of bishops – that the anointing of the King must have conveyed to those who witnessed it a sacramental idea. 'The anointed person becomes another man. He enters into a new status. He is the Lord's Anointed. The anointing of the King signifies far more than the Teutonic delivery of insignia. It gave the anointed person a place set apart for him by God, which for that very reason men could no longer dispute.' But these spiritual advantages were only to be had from the Church; a layman could not anoint; and very quickly the churchmen extended the footing thus won in the ceremony, till not only the crown – replacing the helmet of heathen times – but the other insignia, sword, ring, and sceptre, were delivered to the new King by his bishops, 'though unworthy', as they still acknowledge themselves to be.

But, given on the one hand the Roman legal doctrine which places the Sovereign above the laws, and on the other the sacramental conception of the King as the chosen of God, anointed and enthroned by God's visible representative, what is to prevent the kingship from developing into an absolutism as complete as that of Diocletian, and more sacred? Towards such an end the European monarchies moved steadily for centuries. We deviated. Why? Or, to put the question in the form suggested by Professor Schramm, what precisely is the difference between the solemnity at Westminster and 'the festivals under the Fasces in the home of Roman history, and in Germany the assemblies under the

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swastika in Berlin, Munich, and Nuremberg'? To answer the question in full would need a volume, but there is, I think, no doubt that Professor Schramm is right in taking the Coronation Oath as the decisive clue, though it is one which leads us by a most intricate route, and once it very nearly snapped. The primitive undertaking, required of every Germanic King, to maintain the peace, put down wrongdoing, and do justice to all, had by 1308, under the pressure of Christian, Roman, and feudal ideas, developed into the promise to govern by the laws and customs which the people shall approve. Henry VIII tried to break through these fetters by drafting a form reserving his own Jurisdiction, Dignity, and Honour. It was never used. A slighter attempt in the same direction is found in the Coronation Oaths of James I and his son. But in 1689 the oath of 1308, on which Edward II, Richard II, and Charles I had been broken, was, in substance, enacted by statute, and this is the oath which the King took on May 12th.

It is the history of the Oath which most clearly reveals how England, adapting for her purposes those Teutonic, Christian, and feudal forms of civilization which are more or less common to all Western States, grew to occupy a special place in the world. Looking back, we see, as it were, a bridge leading from the Anglo-Saxon Kings, who found 'dooms' by the consent of his Witan, to the King in Parliament of modern times. Even the great tidal wave, which on one occasion broke against the bridge from the opposite side, receded, and Cromwell stands a solitary figure among England's rulers.

DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN

The peculiarity of the growth of England has more than once been clearly illustrated even in our own day. The nineteenth century, which presented a form of government resulting from long struggles in England, has been succeeded by the twentieth, which has brutally overthrown old and new monarchies alike, and has seen, in most countries of Europe, the very foundations of constitutional life becoming a subject of acute controversy. Two new principles of political organization, both deadly enemies, have arisen from the collapse of the old order. In this world, where the old is sinking and the new emerging, England is one of the few fortunate States to the people of which it is granted to continue building quietly on the foundations which their forefathers laid and cemented with their blood.

If we look at it from this point of view, we can understand better what an English Coronation means. It is a day on which past, present, and future meet. Elsewhere, the times have fallen asunder.

Such wild and whirling words have been heard from Göttingen of late that it is a pleasure, and something of a comfort, to quote this measured and eloquent language. We have done great things in the world, and now that we are less given than of old to boasting about them, we can with a good conscience meet from time to time and recall them to each other. Such a moment of reminiscence and mutual encouragement was Coronation Day in London; and those who were there had their part in a very wonderful occasion. But in the festivities, as in the emo-

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tions, of the Capital, it is not easy to determine how much is spontaneous, how much arranged; and the pains that must go to preserve order and access are not to be concealed. A great city cannot give itself up to holiday: where millions are gathered together, even of people so naturally considerate and good-humoured as the English, discipline must be imposed; and the distinction of actors and spectators dominates the scene.

We have done great things, but I doubt if we have ever done anything better than in creating that habit of common happiness, of which Professor Löwe, an exile writing to an exile, speaks: 'The first and most enduring impression of life in England is the happiness of the inhabitants on all social levels.' I have heard the same thing over and over again from foreigners, and I have never returned from abroad without feeling this happiness rising up to welcome me, seeing it in the friendliness of English eyes, hearing it in the quietness of English voices. And this habit deserves to be recalled, this achievement to be celebrated, too; and all day long, that Wednesday, it seemed to me that I was watching it embodied and at play: very earnestly at play, and well aware of the splendours and solemnities enacting at Westminster, but given up to a holiday where all were actors and spectators and friends together. All day long, till the last rocket had fallen, the fires were dying down on the hills, and even the dancers in the market-place were tired, and all that remained was the vision of the Spire, by day so delicate, but, floodlit against the blue-black night, and rising from the dark mass of nave and transepts, an image of firm tranquillity and strong duration.

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